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# **HUSAIN SHAHI BENGAL**

**1494-1538 A.D.**

**A Socio-Political Study**

**MOMTAZUR RAHMAN TARAFDAR,**

**M.A., PH.D.**

**DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC HISTORY AND CULTURE,  
UNIVERSITY OF DACCA**



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**TO**  
**MY MOTHER**  
**WHO IS NO MORE**



## P R E F A C E

The aim of the present work is to give a comprehensive account of socio-political life in Bengal under the Ḥusain Shāhī rule ( 1494-1538 A.D. ) which has a significant place in the history of the country. As a fairly abundant amount of materials has already come to light, it is possible to write the socio-cultural history of the period which cannot be divorced from its political and economic background. No attempt has so far been made to write a book on the diverse aspects of Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal such as administrative structure, economic life, religious movements, cultural activities and all that significantly counted in the history of the country. The present work makes a modest attempt to deal with these topics by analysing the forces that were at work in the socio-political life of Bengal in the period in question.

While discussing the different aspects, the author has tried to keep in view their relative importance and take care to see that nothing of any real significance is ignored or left out. The first chapter of the work is intended to give an idea about the general nature of the leading tendencies which characterized the social and political life of Bengal during centuries of Muslim rule preceding the Ḥusain Shāhī period.

Materials have been used from published and unpublished sources. On a comparison of the Varendra Research Society manuscript of the *Yoga Kālandar*, edited by Dr. Enamul Huq, with two other MSS. of the same work in Arabic script, included in Abdul Karim Sāhitya Viśarad's Collection ( nos. 386 and 388 ) of the Dacca University Library, the author has found that their texts do not materially differ except in cases of a few stanzas quite insignificant for the present purpose. This explains why Dr. Huq's text has been uniformly referred to in this work to the exclusion of the Dacca University manuscripts.

In transliterating Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Bengali words, the generally accepted oriental system has been adopted with slight modifications. In spelling place-names and names of modern writers, no rigid method has been followed.

I like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable help I have received from many scholars in preparing this volume. To my teachers, Professor A. B. M. Habibullah and Mr. A. M. Khan, of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, University of Dacca, I owe so much that it is difficult for me to specify my indebtedness. It will be really a matter of pride for me, if I have been able to fulfil their expectations. As the present work has grown out of a Ph. D. thesis successfully presented to the University of Dacca in January, 1961, I should like to acknowledge my gratitude to my examiners, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah of Dacca, Professor Nihar Ranjan Ray of Calcutta University and Dr. C. C. Davies of Oxford University, whose valuable suggestions and critical comments have given me incentive to reassess the problems related to the period under review and this I have done with a considerable amount of profit. I am grateful to Professor Sukumar Sen and Mr. S. K. Saraswati of Calcutta University who cheerfully read through chapters VII and VIII respectively and suggested many improvements. I am deeply obliged to Dr. Enamul Huq for the extreme promptness with which he placed at my disposal the Varendra Research Society manuscripts of the *Ādya Parichaya* and the *Yoga Kālandara*. My friend, Mr. A. Sharif of the Department of Bengali, University of Dacca, has greatly helped me in going through the D. U. manuscript of the *Jñāna-pradīpa*. It is my melancholy duty to remember the late Mr. S. A. Sobhan, M.A. (Alig.), B. Litt. (Oxon.), who helped me a great deal in collecting materials. My friend, Mr. S. C. Bhattacharyya of the Department of History, University of Dacca, has greatly eased my task by reading the proofs and suggesting useful improvements upon my language. Another friend of mine, Dr. M. A. Aziz, of the Departments of International Relations and Foreign Languages, University of Dacca, helped me at the initial

stage of the preparation of the work and also by preparing the Index at a great cost of time and energy. My friend, Mr. A. K. M Abdul Alim, of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, University of Dacca, drew my attention to certain important materials. I am under deep obligation to my student, Mr. Nurullah, M.A., LL. B., who greatly expedited the checking up of the typed copy of the book at its initial stage. It is my pleasant duty to record my feelings of gratitude to the authorities of the Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi, the National Library, Calcutta, the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Sāhitya Pariṣat of Calcutta, all of whom have ungrudgingly helped me in getting access to the necessary books and journals. It would have been difficult to make the work presentable, had I not received whole-hearted co-operation from Mr. Abdul Hai and Mr. Ahmad Usama Siddiqui of the Asiatic Press. I remain deeply obliged to the Council of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan for having accepted my book for publication.

Department of Islamic  
History and Culture,  
University of Dacca  
November 15, 1965.

**Momtazur Rahman Tarafdar**





## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER I. THE BACKGROUND

I. Bengal's Relationship with North India	...	1
II. Ilyās <u>Shāhī</u> Rule and the Socio-cultural and Religious Life	...	11
III. Aspects of Arts, Architecture and Numismatics	...	20
IV. Economic Changes under Muslim Rule	...	29
V. The Period under Review. New Forces at work. The Scope of Treatment	...	30

### CHAPTER II. HUSAIN SHĀHĪ DYNASTY (1494-1538 A.D.)

I. 'Alā'-ud-dīn <u>Husain</u>	...	33
II. Nāṣir-ud-dīn Nuṣrat	...	68
III. 'Alā'-ud-dīn Fīrūz	...	78
IV. Ghiyāṭh-ud-dīn Maḥmūd	...	82

### CHAPTER III. ADMINISTRATION UNDER HUSAIN SHĀHĪ SULTĀNS

I. Introductory : The Sultān and the Legal Background of his position. His servants and the Royal household	...	90
II. The Nobility	...	97
III. Central Departments and Officers	...	99
IV. Revenue Administration	...	107
V. The Provincial Government	...	113
VI. Relation of Bengal with the Administration of Pre-Mughal Gujrāt	...	121
VII. General Remarks	...	122

## CHAPTER IV. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

I. Introductory : Rural and Urban Settlements	... 124
II. Agriculture	... 131
III. Trade	... 140
IV. Industry	... 147
V. Medium of Exchange	... 150
VI. Economic Classes and Their Inter-relations	... 156
VII. Condition of the People	... 160

## CHAPTER V. THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

I. Introductory : Islām	... 163
II. Vaiṣṇavism	... 169
III. Buddhism	... 178
IV. The Dharma Cult	... 181
V. The Nātha Cult	... 183
VI. The Manasā and Chandī Cults, Shaivism and Brahminism, Tantricism and Hinduism	... 184
General Remarks	... 188

## CHAPTER VI. ISLĀM AND OTHER RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

I. Introductory : Islām and Brahminism	... 189
II. Ṣūfī-ism and Yoga Philosophy	... 198
III. Islām and Vaiṣṇavism	... 225
IV. The Dhama Cult and Islām	... 232
V. General Remarks	... 235

## CHAPTER VII. LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Introduction	... 238
I. Bengali literature : Introductory	... 239
(a) Poems on the Manasā Cult	... 241

## CONTENTS

[ vii

(b) Bengali Translation of the Mahābhārat	... 248
(c) Vaiṣṇava Padas	... 249
(d) Poems on Yoga Philosophy	... 251
(e) Romantic Poems	... 252
II. Persian Language	... 264
III. Introductory : Sanskrit Literature	... 266
(a) Smṛti	... 268
(b) Nāya Nyāya	... 272
(c) Poetry and Drama	... 274
General Remarks	... 279

## CHAPTER VIII. FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE

I. Introductory : Calligraphy	... 284
II. Music and Painting	... 291
III. Architecture	... 295

## CHAPTER IX. WAYS OF LIFE

I. Introductory : Life of the Muslims	... 310
II. Life of the Hindus	... 319
III. Hindu-Muslim relation	... 340
IV. Portuguese Settlers and Nestorian Christians	... 344
V. Evolution of a National Life	... 345

## CHAPTER X. CONCLUDING REMARKS

### APPENDICES

A. Chronology	... 352
B. The early life of Husain	... 356
C. Ismāʿīl Ghāzī	... 361
D. Texts from <i>Ḥawāḍ-ul-Ḥayāt</i>	... 366
E. Texts from the <i>Ādya Parichaya</i> and the <i>Jñāna-pradīpa</i>	... 368

## F. Bibliographical

A. Bibliographical Notes	... 372
B. Bibliography	... 376

INDEX	... 389
-------	---------

## Maps

1. Joao de Barros' map of Bengal *facing page 62*  
( From the map attached to *Da Asia.* )  
Courtesy : Asiatic Society of Pakistan
2. Rennell's map of Bengal *facing page 74*  
( From sheet no. ix of Major Rennell's *A Bengal Atlas.* )

## Illustrations

- Plate I. (Coins) coins of 'Alā'-ud-dīn Fīrūz *facing page 80*
- I. *Garbhāsana* from *Bahr-ul-Hayāt* *facing page 222*  
(From Sir Thomas Arnold's *A Catalogue of Indian Miniatures*, vol. III.)
  - II. *Sabhāsana* from *Bahr-ul-Hayāt* *following Pl. 1.*  
(From *A Catalogue of Indian Miniatures*, vol. III.)
  - III. An illustration from *Mṛgāvatī* *facing page 256*  
( From *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, May 18, 1958.)
  - IV. Chhoṭa Sonā Mosque, Gauḍ *facing page 306*  
( From Percy Brown's *Indian Architecture.* )
  - V. Viṣṇupur Temple *facing page 308*  
( From Havell's *Indian Architecture.* )
  - VI. Qadam Rasūl, *following Pl. V*  
( From Havell's *Indian Architecture.* )

## Note

*It was due to oversight that the following publications could not be included in the Bibliography : Rennell, J ; A Bengal Atlas. Calcutta, 1771 ; Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan, London, 1788.*

## CHAPTER I

### *THE BACKGROUND*

IN order to understand the socio-political life in Husain Shāh Bengal, it is necessary to review the social and cultural trends characterizing the preceding period.

The political tension that had originated in Central Asia after the decline of the Ghaznawide and Saljūk powers and continuous flow of emigration of the adventurous Turkish hordes to India, greatly influenced the subsequent history of the sub-continent. In the period in question, the rulers of Ghor and Khwarezm dominated the entire political scene. In the early thirteenth century A.D., Mu'izz-ud-dīn Muḥammad bin Sām's empire extended from Ghazna in Afghanistan to Varendra in Bengal. But it could hardly retain its territorial integrity. While the Ghūrī ruler was suffering in his life-time both military and diplomatic defeats at the hands of his more powerful rival, the Khwarezm Shāh, his Ghazna principality was swallowed by the latter within a few years of his death.<sup>1</sup> The possessions in India

1. A. B. M. Habibullah : *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, pp. 30-31 and 89-90.

in which the Slave rulers carried on the Ghūride political legacy, were going through a process of transformation. Theoretically speaking, Ikẖtiyār-ud-dīn Muḥammad Baḵhtiyār Khalji was but a subordinate officer of Qutb-ud-dīn Aibak, then Mu'izz-ud-dīn Muḥammad bin Sām's viceregal representative in India. But his activities in Magadh and Varendra clearly indicate that the Khalji leader enjoyed a wide measure of autonomy in respect of his military plans and administrative reorganization in the newly conquered regions. Considered from the point of view of his relationship with the Delhi ruler, the chroniclers' contention that Baḵhtiyār had the privilege of using the royal canopy and of having the Friday sermons read and coins struck in his own name,<sup>1</sup> seems quite significant. Muḥammad Shīrān who succeeded Baḵhtiyār was practically independent and 'Alī Mardān became free from Delhi's control after the death of Aibak. The political separation of the province of Bengal from the centre was but a corollary of the hierarchical scheme of Turkish feudalism in which a highly centralized government was hardly possible.

The process of Bengal's political isolation from North India received a fresh momentum from Ghiyāth-ud-dīn 'Iwāḍ Khalji who seems to have followed a deliberate policy of consolidation. It is numismatically established that 'Iwāḍ expressed tacit allegiance to the Khalīfah of Baghdad, the theoretical suzerain of the Muslim world, by calling himself the "Helper of the Commander of the faithful", that he was anxious to get legal sanction to his own rule and to leave to his successors a sort of safe inheritance within the constitutional frame-work of the Khilāfat and that while accepting the phraseology of Ghazna coins as a model for Bengal coinage, he applied to himself the regal titles assumed by Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Muḥammad bin Sām and mentioned Mu'izz-ud-dīn Muḥammad bin Sām's regal titles on his

1. Minhāj-i-Sirāj: *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, p. 64; Nizām-ud-dīn Aḥmad: *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbari*, vol. 1, p. 48.

own coins.<sup>1</sup> The Bengal ruler seems to have tried to assert his claims to Mu'izzī legacy in Indian politics by showing his political connection with the Ghuride ruling family of Ghazna. He adopted these diplomatic measures perhaps with a view to stabilizing his political position against *Ilutūtmish*, the contemporary Delhi ruler. Attacked by the latter in 622 A.H./1225 A.D., he warded off his opponent's hostility by concluding a treaty whose terms he never respected. He wrested the lost territories over which he could exercise uninterrupted control till 624 A.H./1227 A.D. when he was finally attacked and killed by the Delhi troops.<sup>2</sup>

Though the establishment of the Mamlūk governorship (1227-87 A.D.) in Bengal seems to have temporarily checked her separatist tendencies, Mughlī<sup>th</sup>-ud-dīn Yūzbak (1252-1257 A.D.) did not fail to declare independence. The rule of the House of Balban (1286-1328 A.D.) was a regular prelude to the political independence of this country. While Tughril (1268-81 A.D.) rose in rebellion against Delhi, Rukn-ud-dīn Kaikā'ūs, (1291-1301 A.D.) Shams-ud-dīn Firūz (1301-22 A.D.) and the last ruler's sons enjoyed independent status.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the disintegration of the Tughluq sultānate, independent kingdoms came into being in Gujrāt, Mālwah, Jaunpūr, the Deccan and Bengal. The first phase of independence in Bengal was represented by Ilyās Shāhī rule which could retain its position in the teeth of Firūz Tughluq's repeated attempts to bring this country back to Delhi's control. In the early fifteenth century, internal contradictions resulting from rivalry between the 'Ulemā class and local administrators led to the rise of Rājā Ganesha who became eventually the founder of a new dynasty.

1. These points have been fully discussed in my paper : "Bengal's Relations with Her Neighbours : A Numismatic Study." (to be published in *N. K. Bhattasali Commemoration Volume*).
2. Minhāj : *op. cit.* pp. 163, 164 and 171 ; Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* p. 54 ; Salim : *Riyāḍ-us-Salāṭīn*, p. 70.
3. For details, see *History of Bengal*, II, chaps. II and III.



The celebrated Chishtiyah saint Shaiḵh Nūr Quṭb-i-‘Ālam who represented the ‘Ulemā section and who had spiritual affinities with the Chishtiyah ṣūfīs of Jaunpūr and Delhi, exchanged letters with the Jaunpūrī saint, Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī, expressing his dissatisfaction with the increasing power of the Hindu chief and inviting Ibrāhīm Sharqī to attack Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Such a design, if effectively translated into action, would lead to the re-establishment of Bengal’s political and cultural connection with North India which the rulers of this country could hardly view with equanimity. Rājā Gaṇeśha faced the situation by offering his son Jadu for conversion to Islām and placing him on the throne—a move that could hardly be objected by Nūr Quṭb-i-‘Ālam. Secular interests seem to have actuated Jadu to accept Islām. Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad, the converted son of Rājā Gaṇeśha, tried to consolidate his position by establishing diplomatic relations with China and Egypt. The political friendship which he cultivated with these foreign powers had probably its origin in his eagerness to check the growth of Sharqī influence on Bengal politics. He also assumed the title of *ḵalīfatullāh* not only to win the support and respect of the sunnis of Bengal,

1. *Bengal Past and Present*, LXVII, 1948, 32-39 ; Salīm : *op. cit.* 111-14. Motivated possibly by political considerations, Rājā Gaṇeśha started suppressing the ‘Ulemā class in Bengal. It is said of Deva Simha of Tirhut that he also adopted at the instigation of the Rājā, a similar policy of persecution whose pressure was felt by the learned divines including Sulṭān Ḥusain of Darbhanga, a spiritual successor of ‘Alā’-ul-Ḥaq of Pāṇḍuā ; Mullā Taqiya’s Bayāḍ, quoted in *Mu‘āṣir*, May-June, 1949, pp. 98-99. These East Indian rulers were perhaps trying to free their respective regions from North Indian political influence which could infiltrate through the ‘Ulemā domination. Sulṭān Ḥusain’s active participation in Tirhut politics is proved beyond doubt by Vidyapati’s reference to one Maḵḥdūm Shāh fighting for Ibrāhīm Sharqī even before the latter attacked the country in 1402 A.D. *Ibid.* Maḵḥdūm Shāh mentioned in the *Kirtilarā* (R. K. Choudhury : “The Oinwāras of Mithilā,” *J. B. R. S.* IX, 2, 1954, p. 14) may be identified with Maḵḥdūm Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusain referred to above.

but perhaps to legalize his own position against his Sharqī rival.<sup>1</sup> His successor Ahmad Shāh is believed to have countered the aggressive design of Ibrāhīm Sharqī by sending an envoy to Hirāt and seeking the interference of Shāh Rūkh, son of Taimūr.<sup>2</sup> Numismatic records<sup>3</sup> indicate the continuation of hostility between Bengal and Jaunpūr during the reigns of Maḥmūd and Ḥusain, the immediate successors of Ibrāhīm. After the disappearance of the Sharqī power, 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain of Bengal adopted diplomatic measures obviously to render the Lūdī power ineffective on the western frontier of Bengal.

While discussing Bengal's relationship with the neighbouring countries, it is appropriate to notice how geography has influenced the expansion of Muslim political power in this region. In their eagerness to isolate Bengal from North Indian political influence, the independent sultāns tried to have an effective hold on the western approaches of this country which cover the strip of land stretching on either side of the Ganges, the natural dividing line between Mithilā or Tirhut and South Bihār. Thus the whole region extending from Rājmaḥal to Patna with the inclusion of Bhāgalpur, Monghyr and Bihār Sharīf in South Bihār and the southern reaches of North Bihār starting from the meeting point of the Ganges and the Kosi in the east and reaching upto Chapra and Balia districts in the west within which lies the confluence of the Ghogra and the Ganges, seems to have been considered an area of immense strategic importance. For control over the trans-Gangetic region was an essential pre-requisite to the defence of the Teliagarhi pass near the Rājmaḥal

1. I am here drawing on my review of A. H. Dani's "Bibliography of the Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal," *J.A.S.P.* III, pp. 207-08.
2. Charles Stewart: *History of Bengal*, pp. 111-13; *J.A.S.B.* 1952, p. 168, f.n. I. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay has recently expressed doubts about this information supplied by Stewart, see *Vāṅglār Itihāse Dusho Vachhar*, pp. 64-65.
3. Elaborately discussed in my paper: "Bengal's Relations with Her Neighbours",.....*op. cit.*

hills and of the fords of the Kosi, the traditional boundary of medieval Bengal. Armies could proceed from the west towards Bengal along the north bank of the Ganges crossing the Gandak and the Kosi at some fordable points. The highway which connected Delhi with Lakhnauti through the upper part of south Bihār<sup>1</sup> led to Bengal across the narrow Teliagarhi which, together with the narrowed stream of the Ganges, made the defensive position of this country quite satisfactory. Invaders like Bakhtiyār Khaljī and Sher Khān perhaps understood the geographical peculiarities of the western entrance so that they found it necessary to follow the more difficult route across Jharkhand which used to lead to the course of the Ganges beyond Birbhum.<sup>2</sup> The belt of land along the southern bank of the Ganges in Bihār formed, so to say, an important strategic point in Bengal's first line of defence and was in all probability used as the base of operations against Tirhut in the upper Gangetic valley which constituted the gateway to Bengal.

Bengal rulers' eagerness to rule over the upper part of Bihār is thus easily intelligible. It seems that 'Iwāḍ exercised some control over the region, east of Bihār, including Bhāgalpur whence he might have proceeded to intercept Iltutmish in Bihār district or to attack and exact tribute from Tirhut.' Epigraphic records from the times of Rukn-ud-dīn Kāikā'ūs (690 A.H./1291 A.D.—701 A.H./1301 A.D.) and Shams-ud-dīn Firūz (701 A.H./1301 A.D.—722 A.H./1322 A.D.) discovered in Monghyr and Bihār

1. Minhāj, p. 159.
2. A.B.M. Habibullah : *op. cit.* p. 71 ; *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 5-6 and 162.
3. Minhāj, p. 163. According to the Bayāḍ of Mullā Taqiya (quoted in *Mu'āsir*, May-June, 1949, pp. 79 and 80), Bakhtiyār Khaljī attacked Darbhanga in 599 A.H./1202 A.D. and Narsing Deo of Tirhut remained tributary to Bengal at least till the time of 'Iwāḍ who is said to have been helped by the Tirhut ruler to occupy Bihār from 'Alā'-ud-dīn Jānī. S. H. Askari : "A Review of Bihar During The Turko-Afghan Period," *Current Studies*, 1954, p. 7.

Sharif,<sup>1</sup> prove beyond doubt that these rulers ruled over parts of Bihār independently. Ilyās Shāhī and Abyssinian sultāns like Shams-ud-dīn Ilyās (1342-57 A.D.), Nāṣir-ud-dīn Maḥmūd (1433-59 A.D.) and Shams-ud-dīn Muẓaffar (1491-94 A.D.) held sway over Bhāgalpur<sup>2</sup> and the territorial expansion of the Husain Shāhī kingdom in that direction was but the continuation of an earlier policy.

The northern route across Tirhut which led direct to the plains of North Bengal, east of the Kosi, was easier for any invading army than the southern one whose strategic importance has already been discussed. It was frequently followed by such invaders as Balban, Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Tughluq, Firūz Tughluq, Ibrāhīm Sharqī and Bābur. The presence of any invading army in Tirhut controlling the main entrance to Bengal, would mean a positive threat to the political security of this country which the foresighted sultāns might have tried to safeguard by exercising a sort of diplomatic or administrative control over that upper Gangetic region. Political developments characterizing the history of medieval Tirhut clearly indicate that Delhi or Jaunpur rulers did not fail to adopt adequate measures to counter Bengal influences in that country. Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Tughluq who was returning to Delhi after having encountered Bahādur Shāh of Bengal in 724 A.H./1324 A.D., is said to have attacked and defeated Hari Simha Deva of Tirhut, for the Karṇāṭic king had helped the Bengal ruler in his aggressive designs against Delhi.

1. *Ibid.* pp. 9-10; *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pp. 247-48 and 50; A. H. Dani: *Bibliography of the Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal*, pp. 4-5, 7-8 and 9; S. Ahmad: *Inscriptions of Bengal*, iv, pp. 11-15, 26-27 and 29-30.
2. *Sirat-i-Firūz shāhī* refers to the conquest of Champaran by Ilyās. S. H. Askari: *op. cit.* p. 15. For the epigraphic records of the reigns of Nāṣir-ud-dīn Maḥmūd and Shams-ud-dīn Muẓaffar, discovered in Bhāgalpur, see *J.A.S.B.* xli, p. 106; E. I. II, p. 280; S. H. Askari: *op. cit.* p. 19; A. H. Dani: *op. cit.* pp. 135-36 and 137; S. Ahmad: *op. cit.* pp. 51-53 and 144-45.

The governorship of Tirhut was conferred on Aḥmad Shāh ibn Malik Tabligha.<sup>1</sup> The country was ultimately reduced by Muḥammad Tughluq to the position of one of the *iqlīms* or provinces of the Tughluq empire.<sup>2</sup> Shams-ud-dīn Ilyās Shāh had conquered Tirhut in the life-time of the Tughluq sultān after whose death he brought about important changes in the administrative set-up by dividing the country into two regions. While the tract of land north of the Burhi Gandak, fell to the share of the Oinwāra ruler Kāmeshvara, the whole area extending from the Terai of Nepal in the north to Begusarai in the south, came under the direct control of Ilyās. Although the Bengal sultān had retained the headquarters at Darbhanga till the death of Muhammad Tughluq, he founded later the town of Hājīpūr<sup>3</sup> on the north bank of the Ganges obviously with a view to guarding the courses of the Ganges and the Gandak and pushing the western boundary at the expense of Delhi. His military control over Tirhut appears to have served as a necessary step to his expedition against Nepal and his acquisitions in Oudh including Bahraich and Benares.<sup>4</sup> It is in this context that the student of history can, perhaps, account for Firūz Tughluq's expedition which brought back Tirhut to Delhi's control.<sup>5</sup> After the decline of the Sharqī power and of the Oinwāra dynasty, which must have given a welcome relief to the later Ilyās Shāhi rulers,

1. Bayāḍ of Mullā Taqīya, quoted in *Mu'āsir* : *op. cit.* p. 88 ; S. H. Askari : *op. cit.* p. 11 ; R. K. Choudhury : "The Karnāts of Mithilā," *A.B.O.R.I.* xxxv, 1955, pp. 120-21.
2. Darbhanga was renamed Tughluqpūr by Muḥammad Tughluq. Bayāḍ : *op. cit.* pp. 89-90 and 91. For coins issued from *Tughluqpūr urf Tirhut*, see Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. I, no. 384. See also Thomas : *Chronicles*, p. 203, f.n. 1.
3. Bayāḍ : *op. cit.* pp. 93-94. It is also stated that a fort was erected at Hājīpūr and that a village on the left bank of the Burhi Gandak was named Shams-ud-dīnpūr. Local people call this village Shamstipur.
4. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 105.
5. Baranī : *Tārīkh-i-Firūzshāhi*, pp. 589 and 594.

Bārbak Shāh re-established administrative hold over Tirhut in 875 A.H./1470 A.D. Reviving the old political divisions of Ilyās Shāh, he brought the lower part of that country within the jurisdiction of Bengal administration with Hājipur as its headquarters and the region to the north of the Burhi Gandak was left under Rājā Dhīr Simha with a *nā'ib* named Kedār Rāy to collect tribute from the Rājā.<sup>1</sup> As will be shown in the next chapter, Sikandar Lūdi who had concluded a non-aggression pact with Husain Shāh, found it necessary to appoint administrative officers in Tughluqpur or Tirhut and Bihār which were subsequently occupied by the Bengal sultāns. Control on Tirhut appears to have helped Nuṣrat Shāh in expanding his territories even beyond the Ghogra upto Azamgarh and Kharid. By virtue of his hold on the mouths of the Ghogra and the Gandak, Nuṣrat could give at least an initial resistance to Bābur.

The first phase of Muslim political power was limited within the north-western districts of Bengal wherein lay most of the political centres including Deokot, Mahisantosh and Lakhnauti.<sup>2</sup> Within a century after the foundation of Muslim rule, the principality of Lakhnauti expanded itself in the south-western direction to include the regions on either side of the Bhāgirathi. The foundation of settlements at Sātgaon, Pāṇduā and Triveni in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries may be regarded as an expression of the Muslim rulers' determination not only to check the advance of the powerful Orissan rulers on the south-west,<sup>3</sup> but also to control the maritime commerce

1. Bayāḍ quoted : *op. cit.* p. 101. The Rājā's son or brother named Bhairav Simha overpowered the *nā'ib* and provoked Bārbak's attack which reduced Tirhut once again to submission. *Ibid.* pp. 100-101; S. H. Askari : *op. cit.* p. 19; S. Mukhopadhyay : *op. cit.* pp. 97-99.

2. For the location and identification of these places, see *History of Bengal*, II, p. 13, f.n.1 and pp. 36 and 37.

3. The names of Zafar Khān and Shāh Ṣafī-ud-din are inseparably connected with the history of the conquest and annexation of

which Bengal was trying to build up along the Ganges and through the emporium of Sātgāon. Political and economic considerations of a similar nature appeared to have influenced the inclusion of Sonārgāon, Sylhet and Chittagong area within the boundary of the Muslim kingdom whose immediate concern might be the growing power of the Ahom, Tippera and Arakan kings and the trade-route along the Meghna-Padma and Chittagong leading to the Bay of Bengal.

south-west Bengal. For the traditions about these commanders current at Trivenī and Pāṇḍuā, see D. Money's article in *J.A.S.B.* 1847, pp. 393-401; H. Blochmann in the same journal for 1870, pp. 280-83 and *P.A.S.B.* 1870, pp. 121-25. The Devikot inscription dated in 697 A.H./1297 A.D. and two other epigraphic records from Trivenī, dated in 698 A.H./1298 A.D. and 713 A.H./1313 A.D., containing the name and titles of Zafar Khān, help us in ascertaining the flourishing period of his career with an amount of accuracy. Zafar Khān's Turkish origin is established beyond doubt by the epithet *Aitigin* applied to him in one of these inscriptions; see *J.A.S.B.* xxxix, 1870, pp. 286-87; A. H. Dani: *op. cit.* pp. 5-6 and S. Ahmad: *op. cit.* pp. 12, 17-21. Blochmann infers on the basis of traditional accounts found at Chhoṭa Pāṇḍuā, that Shāh Safi'ud-dīn was a contemporary of Zafar Khān and Bū 'Alī Qalandar who died at Panipat in 1324 A.D.; *P.A.S.B.* 1870, pp. 124-25. It seems that these warriors were connected with a series of battles fought against Orissa and that Bhūdeva Rājā and Pāṇḍava Rājā whom they encountered, are but the legendary forms of the names of Hindu chieftains ruling under the Orissan king. That the region under discussion was very often under the control of Orissa needs hardly any emphasis. Blochmann saw at Trivenī "the ghāt of the last king of Orissa" and an old road near Pāṇḍuā which used to be pointed out as "the frontier of the kingdom of the Gajpatis of Orissa." *Ibid.* p. 114. Mandaran in the Arambag sub-division of Hooghly district which was occupied by Yūzbak in 1355 A.D. (*History of Bengal*, II, p. 52) and which continued to serve as the base of operations against Orissa in the 15th and 16th centuries, was prior to the Muslim occupation, the headquarters of an Orissan chieftain. Moreover, Narasimha II issued in 1296 A.D. a grant from the bank of the Ganges where he had arrived in the course of a "conquering expedition." A. B. M. Habibullah: *op. cit.* pp. 144-45.

## II

It is fairly certain that Ilyās Shāhī rulers and the House of Rājā Gaṇeśha had tried to build up a state system independent of Delhi's control. Bengal's isolation from North India and Central Asia led to her cultural isolation which seems to have accelerated the process of the growth of local culture. The Pāla rule that established an independent administration after a long period of strife and confusion following the break-up of the Gupta empire, coincided with the composition of *Charyā* songs— the first literary fruits produced by the vernacular language which had already gone through a long process of evolution. The spirit of hostility to Brahminism that they breathe, indicates a popular reaction against the Brahminical culture that had dominated the life of Bengal for centuries. Coming to the Sultānate period, we notice significant developments. Persian was, no doubt, retained as court language ; but there was no North Indian or Iranian streams to feed it so that its very life was gone. A'zam Shāh's invitation to the Persian poet Ḥāfiẓ to complete the Persian verses he had unsuccessfully tried to compose,<sup>1</sup> gains significance in such a context. As the influence of Persian culture on the life of Bengal was limited, Bengali language found a congenial atmosphere for development. Parallels to these situations, also within the sub-continent of India, are perhaps what we notice in the development of indigenous architectural styles in Jaunpūr and Gujrāt and in the growth of Dakinī Urdū language and literature.<sup>2</sup> Freed from

1. Salim: *op. cit.* p. 106 ; Abid Ali: *Memoirs*, pp. 25-27.

2. For the indigenous features of the medieval monuments of Jaunpūr and Gujrāt, see P. Brown: *Indian Architecture (Islamic Period)*, pp. 44, 48, 52, 59. Nasir ud-din Hashmi has discussed the growth of Dakinī Urdū literature in his book *Dakin Men Urdū*. Elsewhere I have suggested that medieval Bengal and the Deccan followed, in the field of literature, parallel lines of development which were in a large measure due to their basic cultural needs, their contact with Iran and their political independence. Madhumalati Kahini, *Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1370 B. S. 1, pp. 121-22.



the political and cultural domination of North India, these kingdoms including Bengal, found time and opportunity to give expression to their respective regional faculties through the cultivation of literature, arts and architecture. If the *Charyā* songs represent Old Bengali, the *Shrīkṛṣṇa-kīrtana* written presumably in the fifteenth century by Ananta Baḍu Chaṇḍīdāsa contains Middle Bengali.<sup>1</sup> The translation of Sanskrit epics and paurāṇic stories into Bengali as exemplified by the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kīrtivāsa and the *Shrīkṛṣṇa-vijaya* of Mālādhara Vasu, was a prominent feature of the cultural life of the period under discussion. The versified stories served the purpose of satisfying the antiquarian interests and imagination of the people. But original *pāñchālī* poems on local gods and goddesses that began to appear towards the end of the fifteenth century, drew their inspiration from the cultural climate and physical geography of Bengal. The stage of the infancy of vernacular literature was over. Thus the Sulṭānate period seems to have marked the evolution of a national life which had not only a homogeneity of language used as a medium of literary expression in the different parts of the country, but also political unity and geographical contiguity forming its basic characteristics.

1. Twenty-two lyrics discovered in Nepal by Arnold Bake of the London school of Oriental and African Studies in 1955, may ultimately provide the missing link between the *Charyāpadas* and the *Shrīkṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. S. B. Das Gupta of Calcutta University has detected in them "traces of the verse form and the language of the Charyācharya Binischaya." He thinks that these lyrics known as *cha cha* songs in Nepal, show a definite process of transition "from the Charyāpada to the Srikrisna-kīrtana and that they are in spirit "nearer the older Charyāpada than the Vaishnava Padavali." The *Statesman*, 25th April, 1963. It is interesting to note that these songs were heard from a Nepalese Buddhist monk of the Vajracharya sect to be tentatively identified with the Vajrayāna order to which the Siddhacharyas who composed *charyāpadas* belonged. The recently discovered lyrics pay homage to the goddess Vāsuli repeatedly mentioned also in the verses of Chaṇḍīdāsa.

The rulers who had to depend upon regional patriotism in the process of countering the imperialistic designs of Delhi or Jaunpūr, must have adopted a secular policy in administration. *Ḍiyā'-ud-dīn Baranī's* and *Yahyā ibn Aḥmad's* mention of the Hindu Rāyas who had helped Ilyās *Shāh* fighting Fīrūz *Shāh* Tughluq,<sup>1</sup> seems significant in the present context. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we find a considerable number of Hindus holding highly responsible posts under Muslim rulers and forming the landed aristocracy of the country. These Hindu officers constituted the intellectual repository of the people, helping as they did the development of language and literature. Thus the sultāns made significant contributions to the growth of Hindu middle class with all its economic and cultural paraphernalia.

The Muslim counterpart of this Hindu middle class having deep roots into the soil of the country, was yet to come into being. The existence of an elaborate order of nobility evidenced by numerous epigraphic records, does not possibly contradict this contention. For generals and military governors formed the military aristocracy of the country. Their contributions except in the fields of administration and warfare, seem so negligible that they could hardly come within the category of an enlightened Muslim intelligentsia whose retarded growth may be attributed to obvious historical forces operating in the society. The foreign Muslims who had come in the wake of Muslim conquest were yet to settle down here and the local converts most of whom seem to have originally belonged to the lower grades of Hindu society had hardly any sociological reasons to spring suddenly into a stable group of enlightened people. Yet it appears reasonable to believe that pre-Mughal Bengal saw the first phase of the evolution of a Bengali-speaking Muslim middle class. Saiyid Sulṭān, *Shāikh* Faiḍullāh, Daulat Qāḍī and Ālāul who flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are largely

1. Baranī: p. 593; Yahyā bin Aḥmad: *Tārīkh-i-Mubārak shāhi*, p. 125.

the product of this evolution. The Mughal rule pushed them to the obscure background of Muslim culture so that they had to be discovered by the modern scholar.

Islamic trends in the composite social structure of pre-Mughal Bengal were accordingly quite weak. Literary and epigraphic sources indicate that *ṣūfis* or Muslim teachers had tried to impart Islamic knowledge to the people.<sup>1</sup> As Bengal was geographically and politically separated from the main centres of Islamic culture, neither these teachers nor their pupils could drink deep at the fountain of Muslim civilization with the inevitable result that they could produce no significant works on such branches of knowledge as Muslim law and jurisprudence, traditions and Qur'ānic exegesis.<sup>2</sup> It was not before the establishment of contacts between Eastern and Northern India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that books dealing with Islamic religious science and ethics began to be written in Bengali, the main source of inspiration being, in this case, Persian and Arabic works that had obviously come here with

1. While referring to 'Iwāḍ Khālji's patronage to the learned, Minhāj says that Jalāl-ud-dīn, son of Jamāl-ud-dīn Ghaznawī, an inhabitant of Firūz Koh, had an occasion to deliver a lecture on religious sciences in the audience chamber of that sultān. *Op. cit.* pp. 161-62. Before Jaunpūr grew into an important centre of learning, Sonārgāon used to attract teachers and students from countries outside Bengal. Sharf-ud-dīn Abū Tawwāmah and his disciple Sharf-ud-dīn Yahyā Manerī who belonged to the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, spent considerable parts of their lives at Sonārgāon. For details see A. Karim: *Social History of The Muslims in Bengal*, 67 ff and 97 ff.
2. The view that *Nām-i-Huq*, a book on *fiqh*, was written in Bengal by one of the students of Sharf-ud-dīn Abū Tawwāmah, held on the basis of slender evidences by A. Karim: *Ibid.* 73 ff., has been contradicted by A. B. M. Habibullah in *J.A.S.P.* v, 1960, p. 214.

the Mughal imperialists.<sup>1</sup> These Bengali translations or adaptations were perhaps the product of an orthodox reaction<sup>2</sup> which had started against the syncretic movement whose sings are clearly discernible in the poems of Shaiḡh Fayḡullāḡh and Saiyid Sulṡān belonging to the cultural *milieu* of the pre-Mughal period. But the religious and spiritual demands of the early Muslims had to be satisfied. Response to their mental craving came in all probability from the old and inexhaustible stock of indigenous culture on which the Tāntric *yogī* and the Buddhist *Sahajiya* or the *Natha-panthī* had been drawing for centuries. Thus a synthesis of Islamic mysticism with local hieratic ideas and aspirations became inevitable. The *Amṛta-kunḡa*, a Tāntric religious text in Sanskrit used in those days by the followers of the Nātha cult, attracted the mystic mind even in the early thirteenth century when Rukn-ud-dīn Samarqandī, the *imām* and chief *qāḡī* in Lakhnautī in the reign of 'Alī Mardān Khālji, translated it into

1. We may mention here such seventeenth century poems as the *Nasiyat nāmā* of Shaiḡh Parān, *Kifāyit-ul-Musallīn* of Shaiḡh Muttalib and *Shariyat nāmā* of Naṡrullāḡh Khān which aim at Islamization. For an account of these, see E. Haq : *Muslim Vāṅgalā Sāhitya*, pp. 164-66 and 177-78. As contrasted with the Muslim poems of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which are replete with *Yogic-tantric* themes and ideas, these works have Islamic contents. The growth of Islamic literature is perhaps explained by such factors as the general degeneration of tantricism which was the source of the *Yogic-ṡūfī* ideas of the Muslim poets, the influence of Ḥadīṡ literature on the life of North India intensified by the tirades of 'Abd-ul-Ḥaq Dehlawī against liberal thinking and the probable infiltration of some of these reactionary ideas to Bengal through the Mughal rule.
2. Saiyid Sulṡān who has combined history with mythology and ṡūfism with *Yoga* philosophy in such works as the *Navī-Vanisha* and *Jnāna-pradīpa* complains about this reactionary tendency of the time. While firmly believing that his writings represent Islamic ideas, the poet wonders at the allegation that he has Hinduized Islām. *Ofāte Rasul*, 5 ff. Bengali Muslim poets of the time dealing with Islamic themes start with a definite attitude of apology.

Arabic with the help of a converted *yogī* from Kāmrūpa originally known as Bhojar Brahman (Bajra Brahma ?). Its repeated translation into Arabic and Persian in medieval days indicates its utilitarian value to the Muslim mind. Its Bengali spiritual descendents are the *Ādya Parichaya* of Shaikh Zāhid, the *Jnāna-pradīpa* and the *Jnāna-chautishā* of Saiyid Sulṭān, the *Yoga-Kālandar* (by Saiyid Murtuza?) and the *Jnāna-sāgara* of 'Alī Ridā whose dates range from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, so that we have a continuous *Yogic-sūfī* tradition in Bengal. This body of literature clearly indicates that a significant group of Muslim mystics had adopted the regressive method of psycho-physical culture obviously under the influence of local cults and that they accordingly shared the Austrik and puranic elements that had dominated the cosmological theories of these obscure systems.<sup>1</sup> There is no wonder then that other aspects of Muslim life had developed similar affinities with local traditions.

Although the outer crust of Hindu society showed the continuation of old traditions and institutions, one could possibly notice beneath the surface a significant process of change and transformation. The traditional ideas with regard to the coming of the Brahmins to Bengal and the origin of Kulīnism which Kulajī literature connects with the legendary king Ādishūra and Vallāla Sena respectively, can hardly satisfy the student of history. The introduction of Kulīnism in Hindu society does not appear to be earlier than the foundation of Muslim rule<sup>2</sup>

1. The letters of Nūr Quṭb-i-Ālam to which the generic term *maktūb* is applied, do not refer to the yogic exercise of controlling nerves and *chakras*. As they deal with religious topics of a special variety such as the ṣūfī's devotion to God, his belief in the Ultimate Reality, his detachment from the transitory and phenomenal objects of the material world and principles and institutions connected with *sharī'ah*, they have hardly any scope for inclusion of ṣūfī practices.
2. The *Pada-chandrikā* of Rāya-mukūṭa Bṛhaspati is perhaps the earliest book mentioning the Kulīn Brahmins of Rāḍh. *Op. cit.*, quoted by Sukumar Sen : *Madhyayuger Vāṅglā O Vāṅgālī*, p. 13.

against which it symbolized the reaction of the Brahminical mind priding over its past glory. The silence of literary and epigraphic records of the Pala and Sena periods on the existence of the institution of Kulinism, the repeated classification of the Brahmins into *melas* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and a self-conscious Brahminical revival effected through the codification of socio-religious laws that we notice in the *smṛti* writings of Shūlapāṇi, Rāyamukūṭa Bṛhaspati and Raghunandana, lend support to our hypothesis.

The spirit of merciless criticism of Brahminical socio-religious rites and rituals that we notice in the *Charyāpadas*<sup>1</sup> and the hostile attitude of the followers of local cults expressed in certain sections of the liturgical texts of the Dharmites, indicate that Brahminical orthodoxy was at a disfavour with those adhering to indigenous cults. The general tightening of Brahminical socio-religious code to which *smṛti* writings bear eloquent testimony, seems to have stopped contacts between the higher and lower grades of Hindu society and the social isolation of Brahminism which resulted from this must have left the lower class people considerably free to give frank expression to their ideas and beliefs through the growing Bengali language. Now that the pressure of Sena political power with its Brahminical leanings and support for Sanskrit culture was withdrawn, non-Aryan deities and ideas could make themselves felt in cultural fields. Thus came into being a considerable number of poems on Manasā, Chāṇḍī, Gorakhnātha and Satyapir in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> It may be noted in this connection that these cults have hardly any concern with spiritualism ; for

The institution of Kulinism must have come into being before the fifteenth century A.D.

1. S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, pp 54-56.
2. We may mention here the *Manasā-maṅgala* of Vijaya Gupta and the *Manasā-vijaya* of Vipradasa, both composed within the last quarter of the fifteenth century, the *Gorakh-vijaya* and the *Satyapir* of Shaiikh Faiḍullāh and the *Chāṇḍī-maṅgala* of Kavi-Kaṅkan

their followers aim at achieving material welfare by propitiating the gods and goddesses concerned. The Nāthpanthis want to attain immortality through a process of Yogic exercise expected to bring stability to their physical existence. The devotees of Manasā, Dharma and Satyapīr are anxious to satisfy these deities so that they may not turn harmful to their material existence. Initially recruited from amongst the animists and totemists, these people could hardly respond to subtle or abstruse forms of any religious philosophy.

The anomalous social conditions noticed above, appear to have facilitated the expansion of Islamic faith to a considerable extent. Mass conversion to Islām in Rāḍh which produced celebrated writers on *Nyāya* and *Smṛti* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and which was the centre of Brahminical orthodoxy also in the earlier period, must have been a difficult task. The overwhelming majority of Muslim population observed at Chhoṛa Pāṇḍuā by Blochmann<sup>1</sup> nearly a century ago, was perhaps the result of a sort of militant Islām which had come to that region in the wake of the conquering hordes led by Ṣafī'-ud-dīn and Zafar Khān "smiting the infidels with sword and spear."<sup>2</sup> North and East Bengal, considerably free from Brahminical influence, perhaps opened up welcome vista for Islām. There was in all probability no difficulty faced by Muslim missionaries in converting the tribal people of the Tibeto-Burman group<sup>3</sup> whose attachment to any form of formal

written in the sixteenth century. These religious poems excepting the *Satyapīr*, have already been published. See the Bibliography; for quotations from the *Satyapīr*, see E. Haq : *op. cit.* p. 89.

1. *P.A.S.B.* 1870, p. 121.
2. Trivenī mosque inscription of Zafar Khān dated in 698 A.H./1298 A.D. quoted by Blochmann; *J.A.S.B.* xxxix, I, 1870, p. 286; cf : A. H. Dani : *op. cit.* p. 6 and S. Ahmad : *op. cit.* pp. 19-20.
3. We may mention in this connection the Khen and Kocha dynasties of Kāmṛūpa, the Tippera and Ahom Kingdoms—all representing the Tibeto-Burman group of population. Minhāj also noticed the Kochas, Mechas and Tharus living in North Bengal. *Ṭabaqāt-*

religion could but be purely temporary and Islām sat quite lightly on the heart of this region till orthodoxy was brought to bear on it by the Wahhābī-Farā'idī movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the areas dominated by the caste system, social repression might have driven the lower class people to the fold of Islām. Although we have no definite evidence in support of this contention, there are clear indications of the hostile attitude of non-Brahminical people towards Brahminism and their sympathy for Islām, as expressed in *Nirañjaner Uṣmā*,<sup>1</sup> a section of the *Shūnya Purāṇa*, having enough of sociological interest. Again Tārānātha<sup>2</sup> mentions how the Buddhist priests reacted to the Sena policy by inviting the *Turuska* king to Magadha which resulted in the destruction of Odantapurī and Vikramashilā.

The cult of Bhakti took a definite shape in early Muslim Bengal. Kṛṣṇa's love dalliances with the gopīs including Rādhā, are mentioned in early Indian literature.<sup>3</sup> But Rādhā appears for the first time, as the fully established lady-love of Shṛī-kṛṣṇa in the *Gīta-govinda* of Jayadeva. Most of the esoteric religious systems are based on the fundamental tenet of male and female aspects of the Absolute Reality represented as Shiva and Shakti in Hindu tantras and as Prajñā and Upāya in Buddhist tantras. It was in accordance with this principle that Tāntrikas and Buddhist Sahajiyās used to believe that the state of the absolute or *Sahaja* could be attained through the unification of the male and the female principles mentioned above. Probably under the influence of this two-fold concept of the Supreme Being, the Vaiṣṇava mind found it imperative to bring Rādhā into being as a counterpart of the female energy noticed in Tantras. The melodious verses of Vidyāpati and Chāṇḍīdāsa representing the

*i-Nuṣīrī* : pp. 152 and 156. The conversion of the tribal chief might lead to the conversion of the whole tribe.

1. Discussed in detail in Ch. vi, sec. v.

2. Quoted by A. B. M. Habibullah : *op. cit.* p. 340.

3. S. B. Das Gupta : *Shrī-rādhāra Kramavikāsha*, p. 113. ff.



theme of the *Gīta-govinda* must have made the cult of Rādhā-kṛṣṇa quite popular whose subsequent resurgence is symbolized by Śrī-chaitanya who is believed to have realized in his own self both the Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa aspects of the Reality. The verses of the three poets mentioned above, give us the crude form of the cult which finds its subtle metaphysics in the writings of the Gosvamis of Bṛndāvana. The amorous pictures of Kṛṣṇa's sensuous relationship with Rādhā as depicted in the late sixteenth-century Sanskrit *Kāvyas* and *Champus*, have close parallels in the poems of Jayadeva and Chāṇḍīdāsa. It is interesting to note that the poems of these two poets together with those of Vidyāpati used to inspire Chaitanya to a considerable extent.

### III

In the field of art, architecture and numismatics, as in that of religion and literature, we notice certain developments which may be called typical, if not regional. Almost all the buildings of the thirteenth century have disappeared so that it is difficult to have an idea about the phase of transition from the early Hindu or Buddhist art traditions to the school of architecture brought into existence by the foundation of Muslim rule. The mosque of Zafar Khān Ghāzi at Trivenī and the mosque of Chhoṭa Pāṇḍuā<sup>1</sup> constructed in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century represent the multi-domed, rectangular type showing the application of such technical methods as the true arch based on voussoirs and the corbelled pendentive used as a means to achieving the phase of transition from the square

1. For the interior view of the mosque of Pāṇḍuā, see *J.A.S.B.* 1870, xxxix, pt. I, pls. viii and ix. P. Brown's view that the Pāṇḍuā mosque was the model for the Adina mosque is based on the assumption that the former has a quadrangular plan. *Op. cit.* p. 36. The courtyard of the Adina mosque is enclosed on three sides by arcaded cloisters and its sanctuary has a prominent central nave and well-designed side wings. But the Chhoṭa Pāṇḍuā mosque totally lacks in these features. Its plan is similar to that of the mosque of Zafar Khān Ghāzi.

to the circle. It was this multi-domed, rectangular type of mosque and the corbelled pendentive method which persisted throughout the whole pre-Mughal period. The rarity of squinch in Bengal and its absence in Gujrāt<sup>1</sup> are quite surprising, if we bear in mind that scientific and perfect constructional methods like squinch were almost uniformly adopted in North India, Iran and other Muslim countries. The workmen of Bengal and Gujrāt were so much acquainted with the Indian trabeate system that they could hardly realize the technical significance of the squinch. Perhaps a similar state of mind is exemplified by the presence of the Indianized squinch in Iltutmish's tomb, constructed according to the process of overlapping courses so familiar to the Indian architect. The problem of adjustment between the square shape of the compartment and the circular base of the dome was faced by the masons of Bengal who tried to solve it in the Eklākhi mausoleum at Paṇḍuā (early 15th century) by resorting to an ingenious device, namely, that of filling up the core from floor to ceiling with bricks in order to change the interior of this square building into an octagon. The architects of Gujrāt overcame the difficulty involved in the phase of transition by converting the square room into an octagon with the help of additional pillars placed across the corners. This is what we notice in the central room of the tomb of Shaiḳh Aḥmad Khatṭrī at Sārkhēj in Gujrāt and all the domes of the adjoining buildings are based on the trabeate system involving the horizontal principle. These devices, when compared with the perfect method of squinch so widely used in the different parts of the Muslim world, look quite antiquated. The solitary use of the squinch is found in the Gumti Gate at Gauḍ (early 16th century) in which one can perhaps detect the hand of an architect inherently acquainted with a tradition almost foreign to the builders of Pre-Mughal Bengal.

1. The tomb of Daryā Khān at Sārkhēj in Gujrāt containing squinches has been placed by P. Brown in pre-Mughal period. *Ibid.* p. 54. But the pure arcuate system and the use of brick in place of grey granite stone, which characterize the building, indicate that it was constructed in the Mughal period.

The presence of the ladies' gallery and the general division of the sanctuary into a central nave and side transepts noticed in the mosque architecture of Eastern India and Western India, point perhaps to a cultural tie connecting Bengal with Jaunpūr and Gujrāt. This inter-relationship becomes almost clear when we compare the sanctuary of the Adina mosque with those of the Jāmi' mosque of Ahmedabad and the fifteenth century mosques of Jaunpūr. The western cloister of each of these buildings has an imposing nave rising above the skyline of the facade of the transept on either side and forming the central point in the design of the whole sanctuary. The soaring height of the nave and the pyramidal elevation of the western cloister noticed particularly in the Jāmi' mosque of Ahmedabad, seem to have been suggested by such West Indian structures as the eleventh century temple of Goṇḍeshvara at Sinnar possessing a high *maṇḍapa* and a staged facade.<sup>1</sup> Percy Brown has shown that the structural design of the three-storyed nave of the Jāmi' mosques at Ahmedabad and Champanir betrays a considerable amount of temple influence.<sup>2</sup> The architects of Bengal and Jaunpūr who were also striving after the effect of height in the nave of Adina and Jaunpūr mosques, adopted different roofing systems. Though the general features of the Adina mosque are believed to have been derived from al-Walid's mosque at Damascus,<sup>3</sup> the sanctuaries of the two structures show significant constructional difference. While the middle part of the sanctuary of al-Walid's mosque has a gable roof surmounted by a slightly raised dome,<sup>4</sup> the central nave in the Adina mosque is roofed over by a vault which, though completely fallen, can perhaps be con-

1. Cf: woodcut No. 344 on p. 145 of Fergusson's *History of India and Eastern Architecture*, II, showing the cross-section of Goṇḍeshvara temple, with woodcut Nos. 387, 389 and 390 on pp. 231-33, explaining the elevation of Ahmedabad mosques.
2. *Op. cit.* pp. 52-53 and 59.
3. Marshall in *Cambridge History of India*, III, p. 602. cf. A. H. Dani: *Muslim Architecture in Bengal*, pp. 58 and 60.
4. Creswell: *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, pp. 12-14.

jecturally restored from the one covering the nave of the old Malda mosque.<sup>1</sup> The side wings of the Adina mosque which have flat roofs spanned by a large number of small domes, differ from those of al-Walīd's mosque showing the gable roofing system. Although it is very difficult to locate the source of the vault of the Adina mosque, it may be pointed out here that the type of medieval Persian mosque with a vault in the middle of each of its four cloisters, has inspired the workmen of Bengal to adopt the system.<sup>2</sup> The height and dignity of the nave of the Jaunpūr mosques have been emphasised by a huge arched pylon behind which rises the dome<sup>3</sup> which is internally a two-staged structure showing squinches in the lower stage and brackets in the upper one. The vaulted transepts<sup>4</sup> in the Jāmī' mosque of Jaunpūr (1470 A.D.) remind us of the vaulted nave of the Adina mosque. The secluded ladies' gallery generally in the form of a screened upper compartment occupying the north-western corner of the sanctuary, is a striking feature of the mosque architecture of Eastern and Western India. Its location and shape are almost uniform in the mosques of Bengal, Jaunpūr and Gujrāt, except that it is located in the Lal Darwāzah mosque in a central place adjacent to the nave and that the Aṭālā mosque and the Jāmī' mosque of Jaunpūr have each two such compartments, one at the end of either transept. The predominance of ladies' gallery in East Indian and West Indian mosques and the total absence of this particular element in the mosques of the countries outside India perhaps point to its Indian origin to be traced in temple architecture containing very often anterooms and two-storied compartments supported by squat pillars, bracket capitals and horizontal architraves.

1. Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 151 ; Dani : *Muslim Architecture*, pl. LV, no. 80.
2. For this suggestion, I am indebted to Dr. M. S. Islam of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, Dacca University.
3. Brown : *op. cit.* pl. xxx, pl. xxxi, Fig 2 and pl. xxxii.
4. *Ibid.* pl. xxxii, fig. 1.

The buildings of Bengal possess an inherent monotony caused by the horizontal effect of the skyline hardly relieved by any sort of vertical elongation. If we exclude the facade of the sanctuary of the Adina mosque, other structures have a continuous skyline and the shoulderless domes roofing them have a little imposing effect. The mosques of pre-Mughal Bengal present, in this respect, marked contrast to those of Jaunpūr and Gujrāt whose massive pylons or slender but proportionately elongated minarets counter the horizontal effect by breaking the skyline.

But the two detached minarets which we come across in Bengal are typical and point perhaps to a distant source of inspiration to be located outside the sub-continent. The presence of a colossal monument like the Quṭb Minār in Old Delhi suggests the idea that the construction of the Minār of Chhota Pāṇḍuā has been influenced by the former.<sup>1</sup> Structurally, however, the two minārs differ from each other. With its unbroken tapering facade which has no recess, but a projecting balcony dividing each story, the Quṭb minār comes closer to the minār of Jar Kurghan in Turkeṣṭān having similar features.<sup>2</sup> But each of the five storyes of the minār of Chhota Pāṇḍuā diminishing in height and diameter, as it goes up, contains sharp recess at the upper end which serves the purpose of a balcony.<sup>3</sup> The receding elevation of this structure looks like a copy of the recently discovered minār of Jam in Afghaniṣṭān which shows recess at the end of each stage.<sup>4</sup> Other features which the former

1. This view has been accepted by O' Malley : *Bengal District Gazetteers, Hooghly*, p. 298 and P. Brown : *op. cit.* p. 37. For the measurement, see Cunningham : *A.S.I.* xv, p. 126 ; Dani : *Muslim Architecture*, p. 46.

2. The minār of Jar Kurghan was originally built in the eleventh or tenth century A.D. A. B. M. Habibullah : *op. cit.* p. 359.

3. *J.A.S.B.* 1874, xxxix, pt. I, pl. xi. For details, see Cunningham : *op. cit.* xv, p. 125 ; *Bengal District Gazetteers, Hooghly*, pp. 297-98 ; Brown : *op. cit.* pp. 36-37 and Dani : *Muslim Architecture*, pp. 46 and 48.

4. For details and illustrations, see Andre Maricq and Gaston Wiet : *Le Minaret de Djam* ; A. B. M. Habibullah : *op. cit.* pp. 359-60

possesses in common with the minārs of Jam and Quṭb Delhi, are a circular plan and an internal staircase which spirals its way from the base to the top, except that the base of the tower of Jam has an octagonal shape. Its disproportionate width in relation to height is explained by the thicker base with which the workmen started in order to have a recessed balcony at the top of each stage. The minār of Chhoṭa Paṇḍuā which is thus distinguished from other similar structures in India including the Quṭb Minār, indicates contact between the fourteenth-century Bengal and contemporary Afghanistan established through such early Turkish adventurers as Zafar Khān Ghāzi and Ṣafī'-ud-dīn under whose direction the tower is believed to have been constructed. The Fīrozah minār of Gauḍ built towards the end of the fifteenth century exhibits several sections, upper ones separated from each other by a shallow recess<sup>1</sup> which seems to have been influenced by its predecessor at Chhoṭa Paṇḍuā.

The buildings of pre-Mughal Bengal may be conveniently classed into two broad divisions according to secular or religious purpose they are intended to serve. While the secular variety is illustrated by such examples as citadel-gates, baths and city-walls some of which are found at Gauḍ and Paṇḍuā, religious structures include mosques and tombs admitting of classification in accordance with their shape and singularity or multiplicity of domes they possess. Brick constitutes the chief building material throughout the whole period and stone, besides being used as pillars and door-jambs, covers the surface

and pls. I and IV. I have discussed the point in a paper: "Notes on Two Indo-Muslim Monuments" (to be published in *Dr. Shahidullah Presentation Volume*.)

1. For details see, Cunningham : *op. cit.* pp. 58-59 ; Fergusson : *op. cit.* pp. 259-60 ; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* pp. 52-55 ; Brown : *op. cit.* p. 42, pl. cix, fig. 1 ; Dani : *op. cit.* pp. 113-15, pl. xvii ; A.B.M. Husain : "A study of the Fīrozah Minār at Gaur," *J.A.S.P.* 1963, vol. viii, no. 2, p. 53 ff.

of walls, particularly of the buildings belonging to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. A bewildering profusion of terra-cotta decoration adds charm and variegation to wall surface in general and this is imitated also on stone facing. The influence of Bengal architecture is visible on the facade of the Dimāpur gateway and in the curvature of cornice, the shape of pillars and the disposition of doors of such temples as represented by those at Viṣṇupur and Kāntanagar.

Bengal developed certain varieties of writing known as Organ Pipe and Lance type of the Ṭughrā style exhibited by some of the inscriptions preserved in the Dacca Museum. It is the Organ Pipe type which seems to have influenced lettering on a few of the Jaunpūr coins.

The coinage of Bengal adheres to the ancient Indian standard of 175 grains showing very little fluctuation in ratio between the purity of metal and the amount of alloy which, combined with the crude execution of the silver issues of the period, points perhaps to an unfluctuating state of economy and to a regular demand for metallic currency felt in this coastal region dominated by overseas trade. The few gold coins which seem to have been struck in commemoration of significant political and administrative events,<sup>1</sup> conform to the 172·8-grains

1. A gold piece of Ilyās Shāh containing the title "Sikandar-us-thānī" or "Alexander the second", (no. 23a in Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. II) seems to have been issued on the occasion of the assumption of that title by the sultān. Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh appears to have signalized the occupation of a part of Jaunpūr by striking a gold coin (no. 81 in Lane-Poole's *Catalogue*) exhibiting Ṭughrā lettering on both sides. The gold coin of Shāms-ud-dīn Muẓaffar dated in 896 A.H. (no. 119 in Hakim Habibur Rahman Collection) which is the first regnal year of that ruler, was struck perhaps to celebrate his accession to the throne. A similar coin of Ḥusain Shāh (no. 167 in Wright's *Catalogue*, II and no. 108 in Lane-Poole's *Catalogue*) gains significance from its abnormal weight of 176·4 grains. Another gold

standard. We have hardly any information about the rate of exchange between gold and silver, except that it was 1:10 in medieval Muslim India.<sup>1</sup>

The coins of the early sultāns including those of 'Iwaḍ Khaljī contain the name and regal titles of the ruling sovereign, the name of the Khalīfah or such titles of the ruler as might indicate his association with the Khalīfah, the *kalimah* and date. Mention of month in addition to date on some of the coins of 'Iwaḍ is a unique feature<sup>2</sup> not to be found in the numismatics of medieval Muslim world. The independent sultāns accepted most of the numismatic features mentioned above excluding the name of the Khalīfah replaced by expressions like "the Right Hand of the Khalīfah" and "the Helper of the Commander of the Faithful." Some rulers of the fifteenth century assumed the title of "the Khalīfah of God", often followed by the qualifying phrase, "by proof and evidence."<sup>3</sup> The practice of inscribing the mint-name was started from the time of sultāna Rāḍiyah one of whose coins dated in 634/1236, mentions Lakhnauti.<sup>4</sup>

In instituting the coinage of Bengal, Ghiyāṭu-d-dīn 'Iwaḍ appears to have been influenced by the Ghazna coins of the

coin of the same ruler, dated in 919 A.H. (no. 122 in Lane-Poole's *Catalogue*) and mentioning the "conquest of Kāmīrū and Kamtah and Jājnagar and Urisah" is perhaps a souvenir issue.

1. N. K. Bhattasali: *Coins and Chronology of the Independent Sultans of Bengal*, p. 144 ; A. B. M. Habibullah: *op. cit.* p. 291.
2. One coin is dated 19th safar, 616 A.H.; *J. A. S. B.* 1929, num. sup. p. 27. An issue of 617 or 619 mentions Rabī' II, *J. R. A. S.* 1872-73, p. 356; no. 6a; Wright: *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, p. 145, no. I. Some of the coins of 'Iwaḍ are dated 20th Rabī' II, 620 and Jamādī II, 621. *J. A. S. B.* 1881, p. 57; Wright: *op. cit.* p. 145, no. 3. pl. I.
3. A. Karim: *Corpus of the Muslim Coins of Bengal*, p. 166 ff.
4. Thomas: *op. cit.* p. 107, no. 90 and Wright: *Coins and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi*, p. 41, no. 161 b.



Ghūride rulers, whose phraseology he accepted with slight modifications.<sup>1</sup> Titles like “the Helper of the Commander of the Faithful”, “the Right Hand of the Khalifah”, “Alexander of the age”, and “Alexander the second” appearing on some Bengal coins, indicate the attitude of Bengal rulers towards Delhi.<sup>2</sup>

Bengal seems to have contributed to the stabilization of the standard of initial Delhi coins, for a significant type of the silver issues of Iltutmish ranging in dates from 622/1225 to 624/1227,<sup>3</sup> imitates the coins of ‘Iwaḍ in weight, design and regal titles. Particular varieties of Bengal coins served as models for the coinage of the countries like Jaunpūr, Tippera, Assam, Kāmṛūpa and Arakan. Some of the gold coins of Ibrāhīm, Maḥmūd and Husain<sup>4</sup> of Jaunpūr, bear close resemblance in lettering to the coins of Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad of Bengal.<sup>5</sup> The features like the grotesque lion or the double square, the rayed or scalloped circle, Bengali letters, expressions indicating the faith of the ruler and the debased form of the 172·8-grains standard which characterize the monetary system of the medieval kingdom of Tippera, are perhaps adaptations from Bengal issues. It will be discussed in the next chapter that Koch and Ahom coins had as their model particular types of Bengal coins. Some of the Arakan and Jayantiya silver issues also betray Bengal influence. In absorbing these numismatic features, the neighbouring countries were perhaps imitating the superior culture of medieval Bengal which had a stable government.<sup>6</sup>

1. Discussed in the paper : “Bengal’s Relations with Her Neighbours”... *op. cit.*
2. *Ibid.*
3. Wright : *Coinage and Metrology*, nos. 49k-50b ; *J.R.A.S.* 1872-73, pp. 359-61, nos. 8-11. Cf. these issues with the coins of ‘Iwaḍ mentioned above in f. n. 2 of the preceding page. Cf. A. B. M. Habibullah : *op. cit.* p. 287.
4. Thomas : *op. cit.* p. 321, no. 1a ; Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, p. 208, no. I, p. 216, no. 110 ; Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* p. 95, no. 263.
5. Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* nos. 81 and 83.
6. The whole question has been thoroughly discussed in the paper, “Bengal’s Relations with Her Neighbours”...*op. cit.*

## IV

Muslim rule presents a significant contrast with the preceding Sena rule in respect of economic conditions in Bengal. In the Sena period, external trade appears to have come to an end and a sort of rural economy characterized the life of the people.<sup>1</sup> This decline of maritime commerce was probably linked up with the break-down of Roman civilization and the Mediterranean Commonwealth the Romans had built up. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the commercial activities of the Italian cities and of Scandinavia led to the economic awakening of Europe<sup>2</sup> which made her turn to herself with the inevitable result that her earlier maritime contacts with the coastal regions of India were no longer renewed. Bengal failed to get any benefit from this urban revival of the West. It is significant to note that Minhāj noticed circulation of conch-shells<sup>3</sup> and a total absence of metallic currency in the mid-thirteenth century Bengal. In the initial period of Muslim rule, coins were circulated not only as a symbol of the ruler's sovereignty, but perhaps as a medium of exchange as well. With the foundation of independent Sultānate, important ports like Sāṭgāon, Sonārgāon and Chittagong began to come into existence. These coupled with the foundation of a considerable number of mint-towns<sup>4</sup> indicate

1. Nihar Ranjan Ray : *Vāṅgālir Itihāsa*, p. 199.
2. Henri Pirenne : *Economic And Social History of Medieval Europe*, 15 ff ; *Medieval Cities*, 55 ff.
3. Minhāj : *op. cit.* p. 149 ; tran. p. 556.
4. Numismatic sources give us the names of Lakhnautī, Sonārgāon, Ghiyāthpūr, Firūzabad, Shahr-i-Nau, Mu'azzamābad, Chāwalistan (?) 'urf Kamrū, Jannatabād, Chāṭgāon, Fathābad, Muḥammadābad, Suvarṇagrāmā (identified with Sonārgāon), Chāṭigrāmā (identified with Chāṭgāon), Pāṇḍunagara (tentatively identified with Pāṇḍuā or Firūzabad), Rotaṣpūr, Maḥmūdābad, Bārbakābad, Muẓaffarābad, Ḥusainābad, Chandrabād (?), Nuṣratābad, Khālifatābad, etc. In addition to relevant Catalogues of coins, consult E. Thomas : "On the Initial Coinage of Bengal," *J.A.S.B.* 1867, I ff ; Mir Jahan : "Mint-towns of Medieval Bengal," *P. P. H. C.* 1953, 224 ff ; A. Karim :

the revival of Bengal's maritime commerce and the consequent establishment of her connection with the different parts of the world. Thus Muslim rule was responsible for bringing Bengal back from the rural to urban phase of civilization based on the introduction of money economy.

## V

Socio-political trends in the life of Bengal during the earlier part of Muslim rule continued in Husain Shāhī period which witnessed also the culmination of some of the historical processes long at work. The vaiṣṇava movement, the growth of *Navya Nyāya*, the final codification of Hindu socio-religious laws by Raghunandana, the formation of the local cults of Dharma, Manasā and Satyapīr and composition of *pāñchālī* poems on some of them—all taking place in the period in question—seem to be the results of a long process of change and transformation. Husain Shāhī rule showed also the signs of certain new forces which would soon influence not only the life of Bengal, but also that of the Indian sub-continent.

Of the new forces at work, the coming of the Portuguese was a matter of considerable importance. As a result of the Papal sanction, the king of Portugal had taken the title of "Lord of the Navigation, Conquests and Trade of Aethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India"<sup>1</sup> and the Portuguese felt fully justified in monopolizing the trade and commerce of the East. The capture of Goa in 1510 A.D. by Affonso de Albuquerque from Bijapur Sultānate with the help of a governor and general of the kingdom of Vijayanagar, had the effect of stabilizing Portuguese influence over the western coast of India.

*Corpus*, 157 ff; *infra*; Ch, III, section on names of provinces.

1. Danvers: *The Portuguese in India*, I, p. 77; *History of Bengal*, II, p. 353.

Centuries of Muslim rule in Spain, Turkish and Arab influence over the Mediterranean region and the control exercised by the Arab merchants over the Eastern trade had embittered the feelings of Portugal to such an extent that her children would now vindicate her supremacy over the Moor. The expansion of political and commercial power and the spread of Christianity were the basic features of Portuguese policy in India often backed by an intense hatred of the Muslims and occasional piratical activities. While Barbosa does not conceal his feeling of disrespect to the Prophet,<sup>1</sup> de Barros can hardly "acknowledge the existence of a Muslim civilization in India."<sup>2</sup> Castanheda who gives accounts of the Portuguese fighting against the Moor, frequently slips into the vision of "the priests with the cross in their hands encouraging the soldiers."<sup>3</sup> If commerce was their main concern, Bengal could hardly disappoint them. Vasco da Gama has recorded in his notes the incredibly high price of Bengal cloth selling at Calicut.<sup>4</sup> Albuquerque wrote a letter to his king dwelling upon the prospect of trade in Bengal.<sup>5</sup> Portuguese activities in the Bay of Bengal and at Chittagong and Gaud in the early sixteenth century are thus quite intelligible.

The advent of the Mughal in India marked the beginning of the empire-building movement which would reach its climax in Akbar's time. Husain Shāhi Bengal had to feel the pressure of Mughal imperialism and also of the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy.

Bengal under Husain Shāhi rule thus showed a number of distinct elements constituting the complex pattern of her

1. Barbosa : *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, II, p. 3.
2. J.B. Harrison : "Five Portuguese Historians", *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, p. 165.
3. *Ibid.* p. 166.
4. J. J. A. Campos : *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 25.
5. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 352.

society, culture and politics which call for careful study. Discussions on the socio-religious and cultural conditions are meant to cover only the Bengali-speaking area and have hardly any bearing on the regions beyond Bhāgalpur and Rājmahal which occasionally came within the political boundary of Bengal and which were very often a bone of contention between Bengal and Delhi or Jaunpūr kingdom. The delimitation of the scope of this study has been influenced not merely by the fluctuating nature of western frontier of the country, but by the linguistic and cultural peculiarities which distinguish her from the rest of India.

## CHAPTER II

### *HUSAIN SHAHI DYNASTY (1494-1538)*

THE Husain Shahi dynasty which ruled over Bengal for about half a century, did not fail to shed its lustre on the pages of the history of Bengal, already darkened by the misdeeds of Muza'ffar Shāh, the last of the Iqbalshahi rulers. The Iqbalshahi rule, in general, was far from congenial for the welfare of the country, for it had fallen into a state of anarchy and disorder as a result of constant political murders, frequent changes of rulers and misrule and tyranny. The Husain Shahis who restored peace and prosperity to the country by establishing a stable government and extending its boundaries on all frontiers, seem to have added a significant chapter to the history of Bengal. Moreover, certain social movements also characterized this period. It is necessary here to study the political history of this illustrious dynasty with a special reference to its founder, 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain Shāh to whom Bengal was indebted for the various advantages he conferred on her people.

The fragments of biography and legendary stories relating to the career of Husain clearly indicate that he came in contact

with Bengali society quite early in life. How Husain became associated with the Habshī government is not clearly known. Both Salim and Firishṭah maintain that he was holding the office of *wazīr* under Shams-ud-dīn Muẓaffar Shāh.<sup>1</sup> According to Niẓām-ud-dīn, he was a *sipāhī* or ordinary soldier of Muẓaffar Shāh.<sup>2</sup> But this view does not appear to be reasonable. The nobility and the army chiefs could hardly select a man of such an inferior status as their ruler. It is, therefore, quite reasonable to assume that he was holding a position of influence and responsibility under the last Habshī sultān. Salim holds that he was not only the *wazīr*, but also the manager of the affairs of the government of Muẓaffar Shāh.<sup>3</sup> The account left by Firishṭah shows how powerful he had become under Muẓaffar.<sup>4</sup> Niẓām-ud-dīn's view may be partly correct, if we think that Husain was, in the beginning of his career, an ordinary soldier of Muẓaffar Shāh from which humble position he gradually rose to the rank of a minister. But no information is available to corroborate this conjecture. If the *Riyāḍ* is to be relied upon, Husain was directly made the minister of the sultān at the instance of the *qāḍī* of Rāḍh whose daughter he had married.<sup>5</sup>

It may not be out of place to notice here what Husain did as the minister of Muẓaffar Shāh. He had intelligence and sagacity to fulfil the ambition which seems to have taken possession of his mind. The measures which he adopted to achieve his ends were surely detrimental to his royal patron. Husain reduced the pay of the soldiers and collected revenues quite extortionately.<sup>6</sup> It may be quite reasonably inferred here that these unpopular actions were the result of a pre-conceived plan of the minister who wanted to undermine the royal power with

1. Salim : *op. cit.* pp. 128-29 and 132 ; Firishṭah : *Tārīkh*, II, p. 301.

2. Niẓām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* vol. III, p. 270.

3. *Op. cit.* p. 128.

4. Firishṭah : *op. cit.* II, p. 301.

5. Salim : *op. cit.* p. 132 ; appendix B.

6. Firishṭah : *op. cit.* II, p. 301 ; Salim : *op. cit.* p. 128 ;  
cf. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 140.

a view to gaining ascendancy over Muẓaffar Shāh who had neither capacity nor determination to take any independent action which the situation demanded. The shrewd minister went, on several occasions, to the extent of telling the people that Muẓaffar was a stingy, rude and avaricious ruler whom he was constantly trying to correct.<sup>1</sup> He was probably preparing the field for his own ascendancy and digging the grave of his master simultaneously. The shrewd and calculated policy of H̄usain had its expected results. It created among the principal nobles and military chiefs, a violent opposition to the ruling authority which finally resulted in a sanguinary civil war between the royalists and the dissatisfied nobles. The minister who was waiting for this opportunity cautiously sided with the nobles. Assuming the leadership of the party, he laid siege to the fort of Gauḍ within the walls of which Muẓaffar Shāh with a number of soldiers and supporters had confined himself.<sup>2</sup> The part played by H̄usain at this critical juncture appears to have been in complete conformity with his ambitious policy.

There is a difference of opinion among the chroniclers with regard to the death of Muẓaffar. According to the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, H̄usain, winning over the commandant of the household troops to his side, entered one night into the seraglio of the sultān and killed him secretly.<sup>3</sup> This view is corroborated not only by Joao de Barros,<sup>4</sup> but also by another writer, H̄ājī Muḥammad Qandahārī whose work has been referred to by Firish̄tah. Firish̄tah does not accept Qandahārī's view, nor does Salim rely on the *Ṭabaqāt*. According to them, the unfortunate sultān was killed on the battlefield.<sup>5</sup> Salim and Firish̄tah do not mention the source of their information. It seems that Salim has entirely relied on Firish̄tah whose account he has reproduced almost

1. Salim : *op. cit.* pp. 129-30.

2. Firish̄tah : *op. cit.* II, p. 301 ; Salim : *op. cit.* pp. 128-29.

3. *Op. cit.* III, p. 270.

4. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 287.

5. Salim : *op. cit.* 129 ; Firish̄tah : *op. cit.* II, p. 301.



*in extenso*. But one can hardly accept their statement about Muẓaffar's death in preference to Niẓām-ud-dīn's view which, as we have already seen, finds support in other sources earlier than Firīshṭah. Niẓām-ud-dīn's view appears to be acceptable in view of the fact that it reveals consistency in Husain's attitude to Muẓaffar.

Thus it seems fairly certain that Husain contributed much to the tragic end of the life of Muẓaffar with whom the inglorious Habshī regime came to a final end. This incident opened a bright chapter in the history of medieval Bengal to which the infamous activities connected with the wazīrat of Husain served as an unhappy prelude. The assassination of Muẓaffar did not mean the automatic accession of Husain to the throne of Gauḍ. The latter was elected sultān by the leading nobles who had formally met in a council immediately after the death of Muẓaffar. Husain, in his turn, expressed his gratitude to these people promising them all the unhidden wealth to be found in the city. This was followed by the pillage of the city of Gauḍ, which situation was, of course, promptly checked by Husain before it could go beyond control. The sultān started his reign by disbanding the faithless paiks and insolent Abyssinians, transferring the capital from Gauḍ to Ekdālā, appointing efficient district officers and getting rid of all disloyal elements.<sup>1</sup> It seems that these measures were necessary for the stability of the newly established regime.

The circumstances preceding and following the death of Muẓaffar indicate that an influential circle of nobles was responsible for bringing Husain to power. In the early part of his reign, Bārbak Shāh recruited a considerable number of Habshī soldiers and palace-guards who may be compared with the *Janizari* or the Mamlūk retainers on whom the Ottoman and 'Abbāsīd rulers wanted to rely for active support. Within

1. Niẓām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* III, p. 270 ; Salīm : *op. cit.* pp. 130 and 132-133 ; Firīshṭah : II, p. 301 ; cf. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 144.

a short period of time, the Abyssinian slaves occupied high positions in the state<sup>1</sup> so that they constituted the most powerful element in the nobility. We may mention in this connection that Fath Shāh's drastic attempts at restricting the power and influence of the Ḥabshī soldiers had led to his murder and to the consequent passing away of the Ilyās Shāhī dynasty whose place was filled in by the Abyssinian usurpers.<sup>2</sup> It is not difficult to understand that the Ḥabshī element of population had desperately stood by their kinsman Muẓaffar Shāh who was fighting with Ḥusain. Viewed in the light of these circumstances, Ḥusain's policy of administrative reorganization and the persecution of the Abyssinians becomes intelligible. The total elimination of Ḥabshī soldiers from the administrative machinery must have left a vacuum which the new ruler had to fill in with local elements. Thus the rise of Bengali Hindus to key positions in the state finds a satisfactory explanation.

The Pāṇḍuā inscription of Muẓaffar Shāh is dated 17th Ramaḍān, 898 A.H./ 2nd July, 1493 A.D.<sup>3</sup> and the earliest coins of Ḥusain Shāh are all dated in 899 A.H./ 1494 A.D.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is fairly established that 1494 A.D. is the first regnal year of Ḥusain Shāh. Muẓaffar seems to have been alive in the early part of that year.

1. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 135.

2. *Ibid.* p. 137.

3. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pp. 290-91, pl. vi. no. 2. Abid Ali : *Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua*, pp. 114-15; Cunningham : *A.S.R.* xv, p. 84 and Ravenshaw : *Gaur, its Ruins and Inscriptions*, p. 77. Thus it is conclusively proved that the latest recorded date of Muẓaffar's reign is 17th Ramaḍān, 898 A.H./2nd July, 1493 A.D. and not 10th Rabī' I, 898 A.H./ 31st December, 1492 A.D., as maintained in the *History of Bengal*, II, p. 141, on the basis of the Malda inscription bearing the latter date. See *E. I. M.* 1929-30, p. 13, pl. vii (a) ; *P. A. S. B.* 1890, p. 242 ; S. Ahmad : *op. cit.* p. 148.

4. H. N. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, pp. 172-76, pl. v (Bengal), nos. 167 and 169 ; Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* pp. 44-48 pls. v and vi,

The reign of Husain Shāh witnessed the territorial extension of the kingdom of Bengal on every side as is evident from literary, epigraphic and numismatic sources. Husain's military exploits as gleaned from these sources may be grouped under five heads : (a) achievements in Bihār, (b) war with Kāmrūpa and Assam, (c) war with Orissa, (d) war with Tippera and (e) occupation of Chittagong.

The Sharqī kingdom of Jaunpūr was being swallowed up by the Lūdī rulers. Completely defeated by Sikandar Lūdī in 1494 A.D., Husain Shāh, the last ruler of the Sharqī dynasty, was forced to go to Bengal with a view to finding refuge with his *Gauḍīya* namesake, 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain Shāh. Receiving him with all honour and magnanimity, Husain used to pay proper attention to the Sharqī ruler's comfort and happiness until the latter died in complete obscurity at his residence at Kahlgaon in Bhāgalpur.<sup>1</sup> The friendly relation of Husain with the Sharqī kingdom reveals his attitude to the Delhi Sultānate. Sikandar Lūdī promptly reacted to this situation by sending an expedition to Bengal. Husain Shāh sent an army under his son Dāniyāl to meet the Delhi troops at Barh. Badāyūnī mentions that the troops of the Lūdī ruler suffered from the lack of adequate supplies due to the scarcity of food in Bihār in that year. This is probably one of the reasons why Sikandar was willing to conclude a treaty of peace with the sultān of Bengal. According to the terms of the treaty, it was decided that both parties should cease to attack each other and that they should not give protection to their mutual enemies. Sikandar appointed governors in Bihār, Tughluqpūr and Sāran.<sup>2</sup>

nos. 108, 109, 116 and 123 ; A. W. Botham : *Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet Assam*, pp. 166, 168 and 170 ; pl. II, no. 1, pl. IV, no. 5 ; *infra*. appendix A.

1. Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* I, p. 319 and III, p. 287 ; Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 135 ; Firishṭah : *op. cit.* I, p. 181 and II, p. 310. cf. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 145.
2. Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* I, p. 320 ; 'Abdul Qādir Badāyūnī : *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārikh*, vol. I, pp. 316-17 ; Firishṭah : *op. cit.* I, pp. 181-82. cf. *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 145-46.

Thus the Persian sources tell us that the Lūdī suḷṭān occupied almost the whole of the Sharqī kingdom. But epigraphic sources give a different version. The inscriptions found at Sāran and Munghyr<sup>1</sup> prove that Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal included the whole of north Bihār and a part of south Bihār. The contradictory pieces of information relating to the Bengal ruler's hold on Bihār need reconciliation. Ḥusain Shāh might have actually occupied these places ; but this fact has been either suppressed or ignored by the Persian authorities. Again it is just possible that the places were occupied by Sikandar immediately after the conclusion of peace with Ḥusain who extended his kingdom subsequently at the cost of the territories of the former. Thus the treaty did not adversely affect the political position of Ḥusain Shāh in Bihār, nor does he seem to have respected its terms.

A study of the so-called posthumous coins of the last Sharqī ruler, 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh, reveals an interesting fact. Although Ḥusain had taken shelter at Kahlgāon after having lost his territories in 1494 A.D., the dates of some of his coins range between 901 A.H./1495 A.D. and 910 A.H./1504 A.D.<sup>2</sup> These post-regnal coins have presented a problem to students of history. Following Lane-Poole,<sup>3</sup> Wright<sup>4</sup> and Stapleton<sup>5</sup> consider some of these coins to be posthumous. Stapleton has gone to the extent of suggesting that "These coins were probably issued *benami* by Ḥusain Shāh of Bengal or one of his governors."<sup>6</sup> Most of the scholars maintain that Ḥusain Shāh Sharqī died in

1. *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 335 and 1874, p. 304 ; *P.A.S.B.* 1870, p. 297 ; cf. *History of Bengal*, II, 146.
2. Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* p. 107 ; Botham : *op. cit.* pp. 204-5 ; H. N. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pp. 218-19, nos. 148-155.
3. *Op. cit.* Introduction, p.1.
4. *Op. cit.* II, p. 207.
5. *Catalogue of The Provincial Cabinet of Coins, Eastern Bengal and Assam*, p. 108.
6. *Ibid.*

905 A.H./1499 A.D.,<sup>1</sup> although there is hardly any clear evidence in favour of such a contention. Qutban, one of the close associates of the Sharqī ruler, who wrote his *Mrgāvat* in 909 A.H./1503 A.D., speaks very highly of the kingly virtues of that fallen monarch,<sup>2</sup> who would regain, as the poet believed, his lost royal *chhatra* or umbrella and *sihkhāsana* or throne. Again, the last of the post-regnal coins of the sultān bears the date 910 A.H./1506 A.D. Thus Husain Sharqī seems to have lived at least till that year. These post-regnal coins seem to reveal the attitude of the sultān of Bengal not only to the Sharqī sultān, but also to the Delhi Sultānate. Actuated by political interests, the Bengal sultān appears to have allowed the crownless king to issue coins so that the latter might continue to retain his claim to the Jaunpūr kingdom.<sup>3</sup> It was probably an attempt on the part of the sultān of Gauḍ to counteract the growing political influence of the Lūdi rulers in Bihār and the western outskirts of Bengal.

Bengal's hostility to Kāmrūpa was of a traditional nature. 'Alā'-ud-din Husain Shāh who followed this tradition quite faithfully, led several expeditions against Kāmrūpa. On the coins and inscriptions of the sultān, we find mention of two places, viz., Kāmrūpa and Kāmṭa. The *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibī* throws sufficient light on the geographical position of these two territories. We are told that Kāmrūpa extended from the western bank of the Brahmaputra to the eastern bank of the river Banās (Manasā) and the region lying between this river and the river Karatoyā in the west was called Kāmṭa.<sup>4</sup> Nīlāmvar, the third ruler of

1. *Ibid.* p. 108; H. N. Wright: *Catalogue*, II, p. 207; Lane-Poole: *op. cit.* Introduction, p.1.
2. Qutban: *Mrgāvat*; quoted by Prof. Askari in *J. B. R. S.* 1955, December, XLI, pt. IV, pp. 458-59.
3. Discussed in the paper: "Bengal's Relations with Her Neighbours...", *op. cit.*
4. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa was the king of Kāmṭa and his cousin Parīkṣit-Nārāyaṇa was the ruler of Kāmrūpa in Jahāngīr's time. With the help of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, the Mughals subdued the king of Kāmrūpa.

the Khen dynasty seems to have united both of these regions under him by extending his territory from the Barnadi in the east to the Karatoyā in the west and establishing his headquarters and residence at Ghorāghāṭ and Kāntāduār. In attacking Kāmṛpa, Ḥusain is said to have been secretly assisted by Nīlāmvar's minister whose son he had brutally murdered. The Muslim attack on Kāmtapur, the Khen capital, did not produce any tangible result in its initial stage. The capital was besieged. The siege was a protracted one and the Muslims could ultimately occupy it by certain questionable means.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Khen dynasty was overthrown and Kāmṛpa and Kāmta were annexed to the kingdom of Gauḍ.

On the basis of certain points of similarity between the coinage of the Ḥusain Shāhī rulers and that of the Koch kings of Kāmṛpa, Stapleton has inferred, "... the fact that Nara Nārāyaṇ adopted a coin of the Ḥusainī dynasty as a type for his own coinage probably points to his father Biśva Simha having been a tributary of 'Alā'uddin and his successors."<sup>2</sup> But the contention seems too far-fetched to stand historical criticism. It is true that the resemblance of some of the Koch coins to a type of the Ḥusain Shāhī coins is quite striking. The type of the coins of Ḥusain Shāh which was accepted by Nara Nārāyaṇ as a model, is represented by four specimens dated 900, 909, 912 and 913 A.H. Their weight and size vary from 161.5 to 164.5 grains and from 1.2" to 1.25" respectively. These coins have on each side four lines of inscription enclosed within two solid circles with a circle of dots between.<sup>3</sup> The coin of Nara Nārāyaṇ which

Mirzā Nathan : *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibī*, Eng. tran. I, pp. 249-252 ; vol. II pp. 806-7, notes 15 and 16.

1. Martin : *op. cit.*, III, pp. 410-11 and vol. II, p. 680 ; Salim : *op. cit.*, p. 134.
2. "Contributions to the History and Ethnology of North-Eastern India-I", *J.A.S.B.* 1910, vol. VI, no. 4, p. 158.
3. H. N. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, pp. 175-76, nos. 194-97, pl. V ; "*Bengal's Relations with Her Neighbours...*" *op. cit.*

resembles the Husainī coins referred to, is dated 1477 Shaka, its weight being 157.49 grains. On each side of this coin four lines of inscription are placed in a double circle with a circle of dots between.<sup>1</sup> Although the question of the resemblance of Koch coins to those of Bengal cannot be rejected as entirely groundless, we do not have adequate reason to presume that Vishva Simha had any tributary relationship with Husain Shāh. Persian and Assamese sources dealing with the history of the then Kāmrūpa do not contain any reference to the Koch ruler's subordinate relationship or to his indirect contact with the sultāns of Gaud. Countries like Assam, Nepal, Tibet and Arakan also imitated the coinage of contemporary Bengal, although no one of them is known to have been a tributary to this country. One of the coins of the Ahom ruler, Suklenmun, bearing the date 1465 Shaka/1543 A.D.<sup>2</sup> shows that the Ahom coinage was modelled on a type of coins belonging to the reigns of Nuṣrat and Ghiyāṭh-ud-dīn Maḥmūd.<sup>3</sup> The Nepalese king Jaya Mahendra Malla (1566-76 A.D.), seems to have reproduced on his own coinage<sup>4</sup> a small circle in the middle and a circle of dots round the margin from two of the coins of Ghiyāṭh-ud-dīn Maḥmūd.<sup>5</sup> This type of coin was in circulation also in Tibet.<sup>6</sup> A Jayantiā coin

1. Blochmann : "Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal" pt. III, *J.A.S.B.* 1875, no 3, p. 306. Stapleton has mentioned also other varieties of the Koch coins resembling Husainī coins. "Contributions to the History..." *J.A.S.B.* 1910, IV, 4, p. 158.
2. V. A. Smith : *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta*, I, pl. XXIX, no. 1. *J.A.S.B.* 1910, no. 4, p. 163.
3. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, pl. V, nos. 208 and 216 ; pl. VI, no. 217 ; *J.A.S.B.* 1910, IV, 4, pl. XXIII, nos. 11, 12 and 13.
4. *J.R.A.S.* 1908, pl. II, fig. 9.
5. Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* pl. VII, nos. 147 and 149 ; *J.R.A.S.* 1908, p. 687, nos. 1 and 2 ; elaborately discussed in the paper : "Bengal's Relations with Her Neighbours..." *op. cit.*
6. E. H. Walsh : "The Coinage of Nepal", *J.R.A.S.* 1908, pp. 684-86. Stapleton : "Contributions to the History..." *J. A. S. B.* 1910, IV, 4, p. 162.

contains three dots on the right of the first line of the obverse with a crescent above<sup>1</sup> which seem to have been taken from a coin of Nuṣrat or from a similar coin belonging to the reign of Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Maḥmūd.<sup>2</sup> Some of the rulers of the fifteenth-century Arakan used to inscribe the *kalima* in Persian script on their coins.<sup>3</sup> Thus it is fairly certain that the coinage of Bengal had influence on that of these countries. The coins of the sultāns must have found their way into the adjoining territories. When the rulers of the countries co-terminous with Bengal wanted to institute coinage, they seem to have felt tempted to imitate the coins of Bengal which constituted a stable and dominating political force in Eastern India. This seems to explain why the coinage of the Koch rulers of Kāmrūpa was modelled on a group of Ḥusain Shāhi coins. This tendency towards imitation may be attributed to another historical fact. After the fall of the Khen dynasty, Ḥusain Shāh and his successors exercised political control over Kāmrūpa for a considerable period of time so that the people of that region might have been acquainted with the coins issued by the Muslim rulers. When the successors of Vishva Simha consolidated their political power in Kāmrūpa, they appear to have issued coins imitating those of their predecessors with a view to getting the minds of the people adjusted to their own rule. This psychology seems to have prompted Muḥammad bin Sām, Iltutmish, Rukn-ud-dīn Firūz I, Raḍiyah, Mu'izz-ud-dīn Bahrām, 'Alā'-ud-dīn Mas'ūd and other Muslim rulers to have Nagri script, Sanskrit epithet and even a crude representation of the Hindu goddess Lakṣmī on their respective coins.<sup>4</sup>

1. *J.A.S.B.* 1895, LXIV, no. 3, pl. xxiv, no. 9 ; *J. A. S. B.* 1910, iv, 4, pl. xxiii, no. 9.
2. *Ibid.*, 1910, iv, pl. xxii, nos. 11 and 13.
3. Phare : *History of Burma including Burma proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim and Arakan*, pp. 78-80. G. E. Harvey : *History of Burma from the Earliest times to 10 March, 1824, the Beginning of the English Conquest*, p. 140.
4. H. N. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. 1, pls. I-III, nos. 2, 12, 25, 31, 41, 52 etc ; Botham : *op. cit.* pp. 72-74, and 76-78 etc. ; Botham



The victorious soldiers of Gauḍ proceeded eastwards along the upper Brahmaputra valley. According to the *‘Ālamgīrnāmah*, Husain Shāh’s army consisting of infantry and cavalry, won an initial victory over the Assamese. Incapable of withstanding the Bengali forces, the king of Assam retired to the hills leaving the plains below to be occupied by the Muslim soldiers. Leaving his son to bring about the subjugation of that region, Husain Shāh returned to Bengal. When rains set in, the Rājā accompanied by his followers, descended from the hills, blocked the roads, surrounded the Muslims and captured them to the last man.<sup>1</sup> We find an exact reproduction of this description in the *Fatḥiyah-i-‘ibriyah*<sup>2</sup> and the *Riyāḍ-us-Salāṭīn*.<sup>3</sup>

The *Ahom Burañjī* gives more details about this expedition. The Muslim army consisting of infantry, cavalry and boats attacked Assam under the command of ‘Mit Malik’ and ‘Baḍa Wazīr’. Following the course of the Brahmaputra, it came upto Darrang district and arrived very soon at the banks of the Burai river. It was resisted by the army of the Ahom Rājā at Temeni where the Bengali soldiers appear to have won an initial victory over their opponents. Baḍa Wazīr, the commander of the Muslim army, was ultimately defeated and had to retreat. The Ahom ruler strengthened his defences with a view to preventing any further Muslim attacks. Mit Malik and Baḍa Wazīr once again attacked the Ahom outpost at Singri where they were completely discomfited. A good number

and Friel : *Supplement to The Catalogue of the Provincial Cabinet of Coins, Assam*, pp. 30-32 etc ; Stapleton : *Catalogue of the Provincial Cabinet of Coins* etc. pp. 58-61.

1. Mīrzā Muḥammad Kazim : *‘Ālamgīrnāmah*, pp. 730-31.
2. Bodleian ms. or. 589, fol. 35b ; Eng. tran. by Blochmann : *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 79.
3. *Op. cit.* p. 134. Salīm’s account of the Assam expedition of Husain Shāh seems to be thoroughly based on the *‘Ālamgīrnāmah* and the *Fatḥiyah-i-‘ibriyah*.

of Bengali soldiers including Mit Malik was killed in the battle and Baḍa Wazīr managed to escape.<sup>1</sup>

Gait is not willing to ascribe this incident to the reign of Husain Shāh, for he thinks that it took place in 1527 A.D.<sup>2</sup> But this date is mentioned nowhere in the original *Burañjī* and is supplied by its translator. That this event is connected with the reign of Husain seems fairly well-established. The name of Husain appears as *Khuphang* of Bengal in the *Purāni Āsām Burañjī*,<sup>3</sup> in connection with the incident mentioned above. The *Rājamālā*, while narrating Husain's war with Tippera, incidentally refers to his Assam affairs. After suffering a defeat at the hands of the Rājā of Tippera, Husain is said to have exclaimed, "The Assamese and the Koch people inflicted injury on me in the battle and the soldiers of Tipperah also insulted me."<sup>4</sup> These facts taken together with the information supplied by the Persian sources cited by us, leave no room for doubt about Husain's war and subsequent defeat in Assam. Thus the Bengal sultān's Assam expedition ended in complete failure which does not appear to have affected his hold on Kāmrūpa. Nuṣrat seems to have utilized Hajo as a base of operations against the Ahoms.

The dates of Husain Shāh's expeditions against Kāmrūpa and Assam have not been properly ascertained. Dāniyāl who was the first governor of Kāmrūpa and Assam<sup>5</sup> could not join his new post in Assam before 1498 A.D., for he was in Munghyr

1. *The Ahom Burañjī* : ed. and Eng. tran. by G. C. Barua, pp. 61 and 66-67.
2. E. A. Gait : *A History of Assam*, p. 88.
3. S. N. Bhattacharya : *A History of Mughal North-Eastern Frontier Policy*, p. 86, foot note.
4. *Rājamālā*, II, p. 24.
5. According to the *Āsām Burañjī*, reproduced in Prinsep's *Useful Tables*, Dulāl Ghāzī or Dāniyāl was succeeded by two other governors named Musundar Ghāzī and sultān Ghiyāth-ud-dīn respectively ; *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 335. But this account is not found in the *Ahom Burañjī* edited and translated by G. C. Barua.

at least till that year. Again the Malda inscription of Husain Shāh which is dated 907 A.H./1502 A.D. records the victory of the sultān over Kāmṛūpa and Kāmṭa.<sup>1</sup> Due to these reasons, some scholars are in favour of placing the conquest of Kāmṛūpa and Kāmṭa between 1498 and 1502 A.D.<sup>2</sup> But this view seems to be based on a superficial consideration of facts. That Dānyāl was in Munghyr in 1498 A.D. is confirmed beyond doubt by the Munghyr inscription dated 904 A.H./1497-98 A.D. in which year he constructed a vault over the shrine of Pīr Nafah.<sup>3</sup> But we have hardly any reason to think that the Kāmṛūpa expedition started in 1498 A.D. Several Husain Shāhi coins recording "the conquest of Kāmṛū and Kāmṭah and Orissa and Jājnagar" are dated 899 A.H./1493 A.D., 910/1504, 915/1509, 919/1513, 921/1515, 922/1516, and 924/1518.<sup>4</sup>

Thus we find that the earliest and the latest coins recording the conquest of Kāmṛūpa, Kāmṭa and Orissa are dated 1494 A.D. and 1518 A.D. respectively. Apparently Husain Shāh led expeditions against these countries from 1494 to 1518 A.D. But an unqualified acceptance of this suggestion is not possible due to certain obvious reasons. That the expedition started in 1494 A.D., seems fairly well-established, for the legend relating

It is absent also in other versions of the *Burañji*. Due to these reasons, the present writer is unwilling to attach any undue importance to this information.

1. *J.A.S.B.* 1874, p. 303; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* pp. 157-58; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 49 and S. Ahmed : *op. cit.* p. 159.
2. Rakhal Das Banerjee : *Vāṅglar Itihāsa*, vol. II, pp. 247-48 and 251; Blochmann : *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 79, foot-note, and p. 335; 1873, p. 240 and 1874, p. 281; A. Salam : Eng. tran. of the *Riyāḍ*, p. 132; *History of Bengal*, vol. II, pp. 146-47; Gait : *op. cit.* pp. 41, 43 and 88; Rajani Kanta Chakravarti : *Gauḍer Itihāsa*, vol. II, p. 113.
3. *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 335; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 47 and S. Ahmed *op. cit.* pp. 153-54. Badāyūni : *op. cit.* I, p. 317.
4. Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* p. 47, pl. 6, no. 122; H. N. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, p. 173, pl. v, no. 173 (Bengal); Botham : *op. cit.* pp. 169-171; N. K. Bhattasali : *Hakim Habibur Rahman Collection of Coins*, p. 24, pl. II, no. 120.

to the conquest of Kāmṛūpa and Kāmṭa appears for the first time on the coins bearing that date. Since 1494 A.D. is the first regnal year of Ḥusain Shāh, it may be quite reasonably suggested here that he started military operations against Kāmṛūpa immediately after his accession to the throne of Gauḍ. Why the north-eastern frontier affairs demanded his prompt attention may be explained here. The ruler of Kāmṛūpa probably expanded his kingdom at the expense of the territories of Bengal taking advantage of the Abyssinian interregnum which must have already arrested the progress of Muslim arms against Kāmṛūpa. Nīlāmvar is said to have occupied Kāṇṭāduār and Ghorāghaṭ<sup>1</sup> which were under the suzerainty of Bengal during the reign of Bārbak Shāh (1459-1474 A.D.).<sup>2</sup> The *Risālat-ush-Shuhadā* shows that Bengal had her military outposts at these places. Ḥusain Shāh could hardly view with equanimity the loss of these places which had immense strategic importance, for the control of Kāmṛūpa over Kāṇṭāduār meant a definite threat to the sovereignty of Bengal. Thus Ḥusain Shāh seems to have been forced by the circumstances to lead expeditions against Kāmṛūpa at his earliest convenience. It was possible to guard the north-eastern boundary of Bengal against any attack of the Ahoms, if the trans-Karatoyā region was effectively controlled. The provocative measures of Nīlāmvar who was controlling two military stations on the Bengal side of the Karatoyā, gave an opportunity to Ḥusain to attack the Khen kingdom. Ghorāghaṭ-Kāṇṭāduār region held an important position in the political geography of medieval Bengal. As early as the first decade of the thirteenth century, Bakhtiyār had to provide for the defence of Ghorāghaṭ<sup>3</sup> before he could venture on his projected Tibet expedition. Moreover, the trade routes that ran between Tibet and North Bengal through Kāmṛūpa<sup>4</sup> might have been Ḥusain's remote objective.

1. Martin: *op. cit.* II, p. 680 and III, p. 410.

2. The *Risālat-ush-Shuhadā*, text in *J. A. S. B.* 1874, pp. 235 and 237-38.

3. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 10.

4. Minhaj: *op. cit.* p. 154.

But what is the date of the conclusion of Husain's Kāmrūpa war ? Traditions give 1498 A.D.<sup>1</sup> as the year of the fall of Kāmtapur, the capital of Nīlāmvar. This date is accepted by the scholars of our time.<sup>2</sup> This date may also appear to be satisfactory to those who are in favour of connecting Dānyāl with the affairs of Kāmrūpa and Assam. It seems that Dānyāl joined his post of governorship in Kāmrūpa in 1498 A.D., i.e. five or six years after the Kāmrūpa expedition had started. He might have gone to Kāmrūpa in 1498 A.D. even after having completed the erection of the vault at Munghyr in the same year. Thus the Kāmrūpa expedition of Husain Shāh seems to have taken place between 1494 and 1498 A.D.<sup>3</sup> and not between 1498 and 1502 A.D., as certain scholars would have us believe. A gold coin dated 919 A.H./1513 A.D. records "the conquest of Kāmrū and Kāmtah and Orissa and Jājnagar".<sup>4</sup> Since gold coins of the independent rulers of Bengal are quite few in number, ( and their use was also quite rare ), it may be inferred here that this gold coin was issued as a souvenir to commemorate the achievement of the sultān when the conquest of Kāmrūpa and a part of Orissa was already a *fait accompli*. This also explains why the legend relating to the conquest of these countries appears repeatedly on the coins dated 910, 915, 919, 921, 922 and 924 A.H. already referred to by us. The Maldah inscription dated 907 A.H./1502 A.D. and the Sylhet inscription dated 918 A.H./1512 A.D.<sup>5</sup> refer to the conquest of Kāmrūpa only as an incident of the past.

The traditions show that Kāmtāpur was occupied by the Muslims in 1498 A.D. It is, therefore, quite likely that Husain

1. Gait : *op. cit.* p. 43.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 41 and 88 ; Gunabhiram Barua : *Āsām Burāñjī*, p. 49.

3. On this point, see my paper : "*The Dates of Husain Shāh's Expeditions against Kāmrūpa and Orissa*", *J. N. S. I.* xix, 1957, pt. I, pp. 54-58.

4. Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* p. 47, pl. vi, no. 122.

5. *J. A. S. B.* 1922, p. 413, pl. ix ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 58 and S. Ahmed : *op. cit.* p. 25.

attacked Assam immediately after the fall of Kāmtapur. Kāmṛūpa was used as a stepping stone to Assam because of the geographical contiguity of the two countries. Ḥusain Shāh could conceive of the bold project of attacking the upper Brahmaputra valley only after having subjugated the lower valley. The Muslim occupation of Assam narrated in Persian sources did not last for even one year, for the Muslims are said to have been completely defeated in the rainy season that followed the expedition. This defeat seems to have taken place in the rainy season of 1499 A.D.

There was a state of war between Bengal and Orissa. Barbosa, the Portuguese traveller, who visited Bengal in the beginning of the sixteenth century, states that Orissa was for sometime at war with the kingdom of 'Bengala.'<sup>1</sup> Salim says,<sup>2</sup> "and subduing the rāyas of the surrounding region and conquering (countries) upto Orissa, he (Ḥusain) imposed tribute on them." Buchanan's manuscript history gives to Ḥusain the credit of conquering Orissa.<sup>3</sup> These statements find at least a partial support in the contemporary Bengali literature which has incidentally referred to the Orissa affairs of Ḥusain Shāh. According to Bṛndāvanadās, in course of his war with Orissa, Ḥusain Shāh destroyed a number of Hindu temples.<sup>4</sup> After his renunciation, when Shri-

1. *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, vol. II, p. 134. Barbosa, further observes that the people of south-west Bengal were under the rule of Vijayanagar (*op. cit.* p. 135). This statement does not seem to have any historical foundation whatsoever. Had Barbosa maintained the same view in connection with the boundary between Orissa and Vijayanagar, it should have deserved some consideration, for military hostilities were going on between these two countries from time to time. R. D. Banerjee; *History of Orissa*, vol. I, pp. 323-26. There was no war between Bengal and Vijayanagar and the two countries were not contiguous either. It is quite probable that Barbosa has confused Orissa with Vijayanagar.

2. *Op. cit.* p. 133.

3. Martin: *op. cit.* II, 619.

4. Bṛndāvanadās: *The Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, *antya*, ch. IV, pp. 350 and 351; also quoted by me in "Husain Shah in Bengali Literature," *I.H.Q.* XXXII, March, 1956, no. I, p. 62, f.n. 18.

chaitanya was proceeding from Navadvīpa to Purī, Rāmachandra Khān, who was probably a frontier officer of Husain Shāh, informed him of the frontier hostilities then in progress between Husain and the king of Orissa, Pratāp Rudra Deva, so that he had to depend on the Khān's help to cross the Ganges at Chhatrabhog.<sup>1</sup> While returning to Bengal after passing a number of years in other countries, Chaitanya was requested to wait by a frontier officer of Orissa until a truce was concluded with the Muslim king.<sup>2</sup> The author of the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* has stated at another place that Sanātan, one of the officers of Husain Shāh once refused to accompany him on his expeditions against Orissa, lest the sultān should kill the Uḍiyās and destroy the deities of Utkal.<sup>3</sup> According to the *Mādā Pañjī*, 'surathāna' Husain Shāh attacked Purī in 1509 A.D. and destroyed a number of temples. Pratāp Rudra who was absent from his kingdom, came back and compelled the Muslims to fall back on their fortress at Mandaran which was also besieged by the

1. Bṛndāvanadās : *op. cit. antya*, II, 316 : "My lord, now that this is a dangerous time, thoroughfare between the two countries has been stopped. The rulers have planted tridents at various places with a view to impaling the travellers that might be found by the spies. I am in charge of the affairs of this place. If they can catch hold of me, I shall face danger. If you are willing to go under these circumstances, I will carry out whatever order you may give me." Also quoted in *I.H.Q. op. cit.* p. 62, f.n. 19.
2. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : *op. cit. madhya*, XVI, p. 179. Addressing Chaitanya the officer said :  
 "The drunkard Muslim king possesses the land ahead. No body can walk in the road out of fear for him. The king possesses the whole tract of land upto Pichhaldā, and because of fear for him, no one can cross the river. Wait a few days until we can conclude treaty with him. Then we shall easily send you by boat."  
 (f.n. 1 and 2, tran. by the author from the original.) See also *I.H.Q. op. cit.* p. 62, f.n. 20, where the relevant Bengali text has been quoted. Almost a similar account is found in the 9th act of the drama, *Chaitanya-chandrodaya* : quoted by Ś. Mukhopadhyay, *op. cit.* pp. 200-201.
3. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : *op. cit.* 197 ; *I.H.Q. op. cit.* p. 63.

king of Orissa. Because of the treachery of one of his Hindu officers named Govinda Vidyādhara, he had to withdraw to his own country.<sup>1</sup> Thus the *Mādā Pañjī* corroborates the account given by the Vaiṣṇava literature.

The sources cited above give us an unconnected account of Ḥusain's war with Orissa and clearly show that the hostility between the two countries was of a chronic nature. They do not help us in forming a definite idea about the ultimate results of this long-drawn conflict. The Sylhet inscription of Ḥusain Shāh dated 918 A.H. /1512 A.D. which throws some light on this event reads as follows :<sup>2</sup> "This building ( has been erected by ) Rukn Khān, the conqueror of Hasht Gāmbhāriyān, who being Wazīr and General for many months at the time of the conquest of Kāmṛū, Kāmatā, Jāznagar and Urishā, served in the army in several places in the train of the King. (Written) in the year 918." The expression 'the conquest of Kāmṛū, Kāmatā, Jāznagar and Orissa' which appears on Ḥusain Shāhi coins dated variously, is also found in this inscription. It has been proved beyond doubt that Kāmṛūpa was occupied by Ḥusain Shāh.<sup>3</sup> Considering that Orissa was under Pratāpa Rudra Deva, a powerful ruler,<sup>4</sup> should we think that the country could not be conquered by Ḥusain Shāh ? Then why did the sultān style himself so frequently as the conqueror of Jāznagar and Orissa ? Was it an empty boast on the part of a powerful ruler like Ḥusain Shāh ? At the present stage of our knowledge, these queries cannot be satisfactorily answered. But it seems that Ḥusain could attain at least a temporary success in his Orissan expeditions. The

1. *J.A.S.B.* vol. LXXIX, 1900, pt. I, no. 2, p. 186 ; S. Mukhopadhyay : *op. cit.* pp. 205-07.
2. *J.A.S.B.* 1922, pl. ix, p. 413. Only the relevant portion of the inscription has been quoted here. The remaining portion refers to the first conquest of 'arṣah Sṛihat by Sikandar Khān Ghāzi in the reign of sultān Firūz Shāh in 703 A.H.
3. *Supra.* p. 40 ff.
4. R. D. Banerjee : *History of Orissa*, vol. I, 322-35.



coins and inscriptions of the sultān dub him as the conqueror of Orissa and this is supported by the manuscript history of Bengal found by Buchanan Hamilton at Pāṇḍua.<sup>1</sup> Bengali sources also depict Ḥusain as breaking temples and deities in Orissa.<sup>2</sup> All these evidences seem to indicate that Ḥusain occupied a part of Orissa at least temporarily. This contention is borne out by the Kāvālī plate inscription of Pratāpa Rudra Deva dated 1432 Shaka/1510-11 A.D., according to which the Orissa ruler assumed the title of *Pañcha-Gauḍ-adhināyaka* or 'the Overlord of the Five Guḍas', after having recovered his lost territory from the Muslim ruler.<sup>3</sup>

We have already noticed that the coins which refer to the conquest of Kāmruṇḍa, also mention the conquest of Orissa and that the earliest of these coins is dated 1494 A.D. and the latest one, 1518 A.D. It is, therefore, numismatically established that the Orissa expedition started simultaneously with Kāmruṇḍa expedition in 1494 A.D. and continued till the year 1518 A.D.<sup>4</sup> Thus the duration of the Orissan war was longer than that of the Kāmruṇḍa war. The Bengali sources and the *Mādlā Pañjī* which seem to give the dates, 1509, 1513 and 1516 A.D.<sup>5</sup> do not in any way contradict this contention. Thus it seems fairly established that Bengal's war with Orissa continued throughout the reign of Ḥusain Shāh.

The first phase of Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal's military conflict with the neighbouring kingdom of Tippera commenced, when

1. *Supra.* p. 49.

2. *Supra.* pp. 49 and 50.

3. R.D. Banerjee : *History of Orissa*, I, p. 328 ; S. Mukhopadhyay : *op. cit.* p. 210. In another inscription, dated 1422 Shaka/1500 A.D. Pratāpa Rudra Deva claims victory over the "Lord of Gauḍ" ; *ibid.* p. 209. But the eulogistic nature of the inscription is quite clear. Jivadevachārya Kaviḍḍim, a contemporary of the Orissan ruler, says that the latter "defeated the sultān of Gauḍ" in the early part of his reign. *Ibid.* pp. 211-12.

4. *J. N. S. I.* 1957, pt. I, *op. cit.* p. 58.

5. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 148, f. n. 3 ; *supra.* p. 50.

the ambitious ruler, Dhanya Māṇikya, adopted a policy of territorial expansion by occupying Gaṅgāmaṇḍal, Pāṭikārā, Meherkul, Kailāśahar, Bejorā, Bhānugāchh, Viṣṇujuḍi, Lāṅglā and Baradākhāt which were previously under the administrative control of Gauḍ. The king of Tippera appointed a governor in Khaṇḍal who was, however, sent captive by the people to the court of Gauḍ. Dhanya Māṇikya conferred the governorship on Rāykāchhāg. He firmly established his hold over Khaṇḍal after having treacherously killed the twelve chiefs of the locality<sup>1</sup> who had perhaps lent support to the Bengal ruler. How Husain Shāh reacted to the situation is not known.

Dhanya Māṇikya expelled the soldiers of Gauḍ from Chittagong in 1435 Shaka/1513-14 A.D. after capturing it from the Muslims who were probably defeated by him on this occasion. At this sultān Husain Shāh sent an expedition against Tippera under the command of Gauḍ Mallik who, following the course of the Gumti, occupied Meherkul in Comilla, while the opposing army under Rāykāchhāg had released the water of the river held up at a distance by an earthen barrier. After the hasty retreat of the survivors, the king of Tippera occupied Chittagong in 1437 Shaka/1515-16 A.D. To avenge this reverse, Husain Shāh sent another expedition against Tippera under Hātiyān Klān. Although this general occupied Jamir Khāṅgaḍ and inflicted an initial defeat on the Tippera soldiers at Chhaghariyāgaḍ under Gagan Klān, he failed to utilize the experience of his predecessor Gauḍ Mallik, so that the result

1. The above account is based on the Vaṅgiya Sahitya Pariṣad MS. (no. 2259) of the *Rājamālā* quoted by S. Mukhopadhyay, *op. cit.* pp. 217-19. It is absent in the two published versions of the poem consulted by me. About the other phases of Bengal's war with Tippera, I have depended on K. P. Sen's edition of the *Rājamālā* whose relevant sections do not basically differ from those of the Pariṣad MS. quoted by S. Mukhopadhyay, *op. cit.* pp. 219-24. For similar accounts, see R. D. Banerjee: *Vaṅglār Itihāsa*, II, pp. 251-52; *History of Bengal*, II, p. 149.

of this expedition was the same as that of the previous one. On their way to Rāṅgāmāṭi, the soldiers of Hāṭiyān Khān were drowned at night in the river. The victory of Dhanya Māṇṇikya was largely due to the same stratagem as that to which he had recourse in defeating the soldiers of Gauḍ Mallik. Hāṭiyān Khān was punished by the sultān for his inefficiency and lack of foresight. The fourth expedition of Ḥusain Shāh has not been properly recorded in the *Rājamālā*.<sup>1</sup>

But the Bengali literature of an early period does not corroborate the information supplied by the *Rājamālā*. According to the *Parāgalī Mahābhārat*, written in the reign of Ḥusain Shāh, Tippera had to surrender herself to the sultān of Gauḍ.<sup>2</sup> In the *Ashvamedha Parva* of Shrikara Nandī, another contemporary of Ḥusain Shāh, we are told that the king of Tippera who lived in a chronic state of fear for Chhuti Khān, Ḥusain's governor in Chittagong, had to retire to the hills because of the onrush of the Muslim soldiers in his country and ultimately acknowledged the Bengal governor's supremacy by offering him a number of horses and elephants as tribute.<sup>3</sup> This statement is borne out by an epigraphic evidence also. The Sonārgaon inscription of Ḥusain Shāh dated 919 A.H./1513 A.D. shows that Khawās Khān was *sar-i-lashkar* or "the military governor of the land of Tippera and *wazīr* of *iqḷīm* Mu'azzamābād."<sup>4</sup> The expression seems to indicate that Khawās Khān who was already the governor of Mu'azzamābād was subsequently allowed to exercise administrative control over the newly conquered region of Tippera. Thus the conquest of

1. *The Rājamālā* : ed. Kaliprasanna Sen. pp. 22-28 ; *I.H.Q. op. cit.* pp. 64-67.
2. Sukumar Sen : *Vāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa*, 1, p. 225, f. n.
3. Shrikara Nandī : *op. cit.* pp. 3-4 ; also quoted in *I.H.Q. op. cit.* pp. 66-67, f.n. 56.
4. *J.A.S.B.* 1872, vol. xli, pt. 1, p. 333. The governorship of two countries was conferred upon the same person, for Mu'azzamābād identified by Blochmann with Sonārgaon region (*ibid.* p. 334) was contiguous with Tippera.

a part of Tippera by Ḥusain Shāh seems fairly established. In the face of so many positive proofs in favour of this conclusion, it is not possible for us to safely rely on the information supplied by the *Rājamālā*, written towards the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The *Rājamālā* appears to have referred to the initial stage of Ḥusain's war with Tippera in the course of which the sultān had to face some reverses ; but the hostilities culminated in the conquest of a part of Tippera by Ḥusain Shāh. Kavindra Parameshvara's and Shrikara Nandi's statements indicate that Parāgal Khān and Chuṭi Khān, governors of Chittagong, probably exercised some control over a part of Tippera.

The possession of Chittagong was being disputed by the kings of Gauḍ, Tippera and Arakan. The foregoing account shows that the hostilities between the sultān and the king of Tippera centred very often on the occupation of Chittagong and that the latter was successful in wresting it from Ḥusain Shāh in 1513-14 A.D. and 1515-16 A.D.<sup>2</sup> The *Rājamālā* categorically states that Tippera successfully held control over Chittagong after her war with Ḥusain Shāh was over.<sup>3</sup> But it is proved beyond doubt that it came under the sultān ultimately. We are told that the ruler of Arakan (Rosāṅga), taking advantage of Ḥusain's pre-occupation with Tippera, occupied Chittagong.<sup>4</sup> The *Aḥādīth-ul-Khawānīn* states that Nuṣrat who expelled the Arakanese from Chittagong, renamed it Faṭḥābād with a view to commemorating the conquest.<sup>5</sup> This statement finds support in Daulat Wazīr Bahrām Khān's *Lāilī-Majnu* according to which Ḥusain Shāh sent one wazīr Ḥamīd Khān to occupy Chittagong which was named Faṭḥābād.<sup>6</sup> It seems that Ḥamīd Khān was

1. *Op. cit.* part I, Introduction.

2. *Supra.* pp. 53.

3. The *Rājamālā*, II, pp. 30, 31 and 33.

4. *Ibid.* p. 24.

5. Ḥamīdullāh Khān : *Aḥādīth-ul-Khawānīn*, pp. 17-18.

6. *Op. cit.* quoted by Abdul Karīm Sāhityavishārād : *Vāṅglā Prācin Puthir Vivaraṇ*, pt. I, p. 15 ; *Lāilī-Majnu*, ed. Ahmad Sharīf, pp. 7, 8 and 9 ; cf. *B. P. P.* LXXVII, pt. I, p. 48.

sent together with Nuṣrat to conquer Chittagong. The *Parāgalī Mahābhārat* maintains that Parāgal Khān was appointed military governor of Chittagong.<sup>1</sup> Corroborating this information, Shrikara Nandi says that Parāgal was succeeded by his son, Chhuṭi Khān, in the governorship, their political headquarters being situated on the bank of the river Fenī.<sup>2</sup> Thus the evidence gathered from Bengali literature and the Persian history of Chittagong conclusively show that Husain Shāh was able to occupy Chittagong which ultimately formed an integral part of his kingdom. This explains why Joao de Silveira, the Portuguese emissary, found Chittagong in 1517 A.D. in the possession of the king of Bengal of whom the king of Arakan was a vassal.<sup>3</sup> Thus we can distinguish several stages of development in the history of Chittagong under the Husain Shāhi rule : first :- the recovery of Chittagong from the Arakanese by Rukn-ud-dīn Bārbak (1459-1474 A.D.)<sup>4</sup> and the continuous sway of Gauḍ over Chittagong till at least 1513-14 A.D. ; second :- the conquest of the place by Dhanya Māṇikya between 1513 and 1516 A.D.,<sup>5</sup> third :- reconquest of Chittagong by Husain probably in 1516 A.D. ; fourth :- the occupation of Chittagong by the king of Arakan who seems to have taken advantage of Husain's preoccupation with Tippera and fifth :- the recovery of Chittagong by Husain in 1517 A.D. and the uninterrupted hold of Husain and his successors over Chittagong till 1538 A.D.<sup>6</sup>

The tripartite war which was going on among the rulers

1. *Op. cit.* quoted by D. C. Sen : *Variga Bhāṣā O Sāhitya*, p. 94.
2. *Op. cit.* p. 3 ; *I. H. Q. op. cit.* p. 68.
3. J. J. A. Campos : *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 28, foot note. O'Malley says in *Chittagong Gazetteer*, p. 22, that it was under the ruler of Arakan in 1517. But this statement is nowhere supported. cf : *History of Bengal*, II, p. 150
4. This is proved by the inscription of Rāstī Khān who built a mosque in Chittagong in 1473-74 A.D. at the order of Majlis-i-'Alā who was an officer of Bārbak. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 135.
5. *Supra.* p. 55.
6. Campos : *op. cit.* 30-40.

of Bengal, Tippera and Arakan over the possession of Chittagong was primarily due to its strategic and commercial importance. The sea-port used to control the entrance and exit of mercantile vessels, ambassadors and strangers visiting Bengal. It was at Chittagong that the Muslim ruler had provided for the reception of the Chinese diplomatic mission which was coming to the court of Pāṇḍu in the early fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Like the port of Sātgaon, this city became the cynosure of the Portuguese who called it Porto Grande and who, later on, controlled its custom-houses which used to bring a considerable amount of revenue to the Muslim ruler. Moreover, the defence of the south-eastern boundary of the country could be properly strengthened only by an effective hold on Chittagong. As a preliminary to the occupation of this place of commercial and strategical importance, Husain Shāh seems to have attacked Tippera. As indicated in the *Ashvamedha Parva*, the conquest of Chittagong and the establishment of a Muslim military base on the banks of the Feni protected by the walls of the Chandra Shekhar range,<sup>2</sup> had the effect of weakening the position of the Tippera ruler. Husain Shāhī rulers showed practical wisdom by locating their military and administrative machinery at a considerable distance from Chittagong, then exposed to external attacks. It is, therefore, no mere accident that the Mughal governors should have built an outpost at Jagdia on the Feni and strong fortifications near Chittagong on either side of the Karṇafuli,<sup>3</sup> and that the Nawābs of the eighteenth-century Bengal should have had, in the neighbourhood of this place, the *thānah* of Feni, "the rare base of" the *thānah* of Chittagong, which was kept under vigilant defence, when the latter was recovered from the Arakanese in 1729 A.D.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Chinese Annals*, Eng. tran in *Vishva-bhārati Annals*, 1945, pp. 117, 120, 123 and 128.
2. The military out-post of Parāgal Khān, now reduced to the position of an insignificant village near the Sitākunḍa hill, called Parāgalpur, shows hardly any relics of medieval period.
3. Shihāb-ud-dīn Ṭālish: *op. cit.* cited in J. N. Sarkar's *Studies in Mughal India*, pp. 120-21.
4. Āzād-ul-Husainī: *Naubahār-i-Murshid Qulī Khānī*, tran by Sir J. N. Sarkar: *Bengal Nawābs*, p. 4.

It is very difficult to form an accurate idea about the frontiers of Husain Shāhī Bengal. Since the country was in a state of war with Orissa, Delhi, Kāmrūpa, Assam, Tippera and Arakan, its frontiers were constantly fluctuating. Still it is worth-while to discuss the position of the frontiers of Bengal on the basis of the sources at our disposal.

The meeting points of Bengal and Orissa have nowhere been mentioned. If the *Risāla* and the *Mādla Pañjī* are to be relied upon, Bengal had a frontier outpost at Mandaran which constituted her base of operations against the ruler of Orissa.<sup>1</sup> The whole region extending from Mandaran to Jājnagar appears to have been a debatable ground between Bengal and Orissa. While giving an account of the kingdom of Orissa, Barbosa remarks, "It extends along the coast northwards where there is a river called Ganges (but they call it Guorigua), and on the further bank of this river begins the kingdom of Bengal where also the King of Otisa is sometimes at war."<sup>2</sup> Thus we find that the river Ganges is stated to have formed the boundary between Bengal and Orissa. It cannot be denied that Bengal at that time was separated from Orissa by a river reference to which has been made by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj.<sup>3</sup> The universally known Ganges which has always been sacred to the Hindus, was not the boundary between Bengal and Orissa, for Mandaran which was included in the kingdom of Husain Shāh is situated far beyond the modern Ganges. The map of Joao de Barros shows that *Mandaram* was at a considerable distance from the river. Barbosa appears to have confused one of the tributaries of the Ganges which was known also by that name, with the main stream of the Ganges. Before projecting this hypothesis, we may cast a glance at the map of Joao de Barros, drawn in 1550 A.D. in which a river called *Ganga* has been shown as falling into the estuary of the Hooghly from the north-

1. The *Risāla* : J.A.S.B. 1874, pp. 237-38 ; *supra*, p. 50.

2. *Op. cit.* II, pp. 133-34.

3. *Op. cit.* p. 179 ; *supra*, p. 50 ; footnote 2.

western direction.<sup>1</sup> The real Ganges is shown as flowing far above south-western Bengal. Let us notice here what de Barros has said about this river. "The kingdom of Bengal", he says, "then is situated in that region where the River Ganges discharges its waters by two principal branches into the Eastern Ocean, and where the land drawing further back from its waters forms the great gulf which geographers term Gangetic and which we now name from Bengal. Into the mouths of these two branches two notable rivers discharge themselves, one from the east, and the other from the west, both being boundaries of the Kingdom.....The other river enters the western arm of the Ganges below another city called Satigam..... The other river which enters the Ganges below Satigam runs through the Kingdom of Orixa and its source is on the slopes of the mountains called Gate ( Ghats ) by Indians in those parts which are near Chaul. And as this river is a great one, and flows through many lands, the natives, in imitation of the Ganges into which it discharges its waters give it also the name of Ganga, and hold its water to be as holy as those of the Ganges itself."<sup>2</sup>

If carefully analyzed, the above statement of de Barros shows the following features : (a) the river Ganga, drawn in his map, forms the western boundary of Bengal ; (b) falls into the branch of the Ganges below Sātgaon ; (c) has its sources in the Ghāt mountains and (d) is called Ganga by the Hindus who consider its water to be as sacred as that of the Ganges. Ganga was, therefore, an imitation name. It is due to these reasons that we are in favour of identifying the Ganges of Barbosa with the river Ganga shown in the map of de Barros. It seems that this river is no other than modern Kansai<sup>3</sup> which

1. See the map attached.

2. Joao de Barros : *Da Asia*, reproduced in the *Book of Barbosa* II, pp. 244-45, Appendix I.

3. This contention seems to be confirmed, if the map of Joao de Barros is compared with that of modern Bengal. The maps of Rennell and Van den Broucke also corroborate this view. The



may be tentatively regarded as the western boundary of Ḥusain Shāh's Bengal. De Barros has located *Reino de Orixa* on the western side of this river. Several inscriptions of Ḥusain Shāh mention 'arṣah Sājilā Manḡbād together with thānah Lāoblā and the towns of Ḥusainābād and Hādigar which have been correctly identified by Rakhal Das Banerji and Blochmann.<sup>1</sup> Thus it appears that the *sarkārs* of Sātgaon, Sharifābād, Sulaimānābād, and Mādāran<sup>2</sup> which formed the region south of the Ganges and west of the Bhāgīrathī were included in the kingdom of Ḥusain.

The northern outskirts of the Sundarbans into which Ḥusain does not seem to have penetrated probably formed the southern frontier of his kingdom. Br̥ndāvanadās has made incidental reference to Chhatrabhog<sup>3</sup> whose inclusion in Bengal is proved beyond doubt. The evidence supplied by the Trienī inscription<sup>4</sup> clearly shows that Hādigar, identified with Hātīgarh, south of Diamond Harbour on the Hooghly, formed an integral

Ganges of Barbosa answers to the Kambyson, called by Ptolemy the westernmost mouth of the Ganges. H. C. Roychaudhury thinks that the "Kambyson stands for the Sanskrit Kapiśā" and "This answers to the modern Kāśī which flows past Midnapore and, like the Rupnārāyan, may have been erroneously supposed to be a branch of the Ganges." *History of Bengal*, I, p. 11. But see S. Mukhopadhyaya who is inclined to accept the Mantreshvara as the river crossed by Chaitanya. *op. cit.* p. 286.

1. For the inscriptions mentioning these names, see *E.I.M.* 1915-16, pp. 12-13, pl. iv; *J.A.S.B.* 1870, p. 284 and 1909, p. 260; Dani: *Bibliography*, pp. 53-54 and 64-65; S. Ahmed: *op. cit.* p. 175 ff. For the identification of these places, see *J.A.S.B.* 1870, pt. I, p. 294, footnote and p. 295 and 1909, pp. 251-52.
2. 'Ā'in-I-Akbarī: ed. Jarret and Sarkar, vol. II, p. 153-55.
3. *Supra.* p. 50. Chhatrabhog is at present situated in Diamond Harbour subdivision in the 24-Parganas.
4. *E.I.M.* 1915-16, pp. 12-13; *J.A.S.B.* 1870, p. 284.

part of his dominions. It may be reasonably inferred here that Husain's southern frontier extended from this place to Khalifa-tābād or modern Bāgerhāt, for the latter was one of the mint-towns of Bengal in the reign of 'Alā'ud-dīn Husain Shāh.<sup>1</sup> The sultān had jurisdiction over Barisal district which was situated in the *taqsim* of Vāṅḍorā in Fathābād division.<sup>2</sup> Thus he had a continuous frontier in the south.

Regarding the south-eastern boundary, Joao de Barros has the following : "..... one of these our people call the River of Chatigam, as it enters the eastern mouth of the Ganges at a city of this name.....The Chatigam river rises in the mountains of the kingdoms of Ava and of Vagaru, and flowing from N. E. to S. W. divides the kingdom of Bengala from the lands of Codavascam, and along the courses of this river lie the kingdoms of Tipora and of Brema Limma which surround Bengala in the East"<sup>3</sup>.

The map of de Barros shows that what the cartographer calls the Chatigam river is nothing but the modern Karnaphuli which finds mention also in the *Lāilī Majnu*<sup>4</sup> of Daulat Wazīr. We have already noticed that the governors of Husain had their

1. Nuṣrat was allowed to issue coins from this place even in the life time of his father. These coins are dated 922 A.H. Wright : *Catalogue*, pp. 177-78, nos. 211 and 212 ; N. K. Bhattasali : *Taifoor Collection*, p. 31, no. 162 in pl. v-r ; Blochmann : *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 297, pl. ix, no. 10.
2. Vijaya Gupta : *Manasā-maṅgal*, ed. Basanta Kumar Bhattacharya, 3rd ed. p. 4. The poet writing in 1494-95 A.D. says that his village, Fullashri (at present a village in Barisal) was included in "*muluk Fatehābād Vāṅḍorā taksim*" to be tentatively identified with Baṅgālabaḍā mentioned in the Madhyapaḍā inscription of Vishvarūpasena, *History of Bengal*, I, p. 18.
3. De Barros : *op. cit.* reproduced in the *Book of Barbosa* II, p. 244-45.
4. *Op. cit.* p. 9.

headquarters on the Feni river.<sup>1</sup> Thus the region extending 'from the Feni to the Karnaphuli seems to have belonged to Husain Shāh at least after the year 1517 A.D.

In the east, Bengal was separated from the kingdom of Tippera by the Gumti river which, as we have seen, the soldiers of Husain Shāh tried to cross on several occasions.<sup>2</sup> The Sylhet inscription of Husain Shāh<sup>3</sup> clearly indicates that Sylhet was, for all practical purposes, the north-eastern boundary of the kingdom of Bengal. Kāmrūpa which appears as *Reino De Comotah*, on the map of de Barros, was the northernmost region of Bengal. The capital Kāmtapur, marked as *Comotah* by de Barros, was situated on the bank of the Darla river which joins the Brahmaputra in the south.<sup>4</sup> In the north-west, the kingdom of Husain included probably the whole of northern Bihār and a part of southern Bihār.<sup>5</sup> De Barros says, "these mountains separate the Bengalas from the Patane peoples, and, lower down towards the south, from the Kingdom of Orixá, the level lands of Bengala lying between the mountains and the stream of the Ganges."<sup>6</sup> These mountains were probably the Kharagpur hills. Thus the Portuguese writer seems to maintain that the Ganges and the mountains of the west separated Bengal from the 'Patane people' or the Afghāns (Pathans ?) of Bihār and the Orissan people. This is what he has clearly shown in the map. The soldiers of Sikandar faced the Bengali soldiers at Barh<sup>7</sup> which seems to have marked the meeting point of Bihār and Bengal.

1. *Supra.* p. 56.

2. *Supra.* p. 53 and 54.

3. *Supra.* p. 51.

4. For this consult the map of Joao de Barros attached hereto.

5. The inscriptions of Husain found at Monghyr, Bonahara and Sāran seem to confirm this contention. *Supra.* p. 39.

6. Reproduced by M. L. Dames in the *Book of Barbosa*, II, Appendix I, p. 245.

7. *Supra.* p. 38.





In Rennell's map, Barh is located on the southern bank of the Ganges and is 22 miles north-east of Bihār town.<sup>1</sup>

Niẓām-ud-dīn holds that Ḥusain Shāh died in 929 A.H. after having enjoyed a considerably long reign of twenty-seven years and a few months<sup>2</sup> Firīshṭah,<sup>3</sup> and Salīm<sup>4</sup> give 930 and 927 respectively as the dates of the Sulṭān's death neither of which can be accepted. The Sonārgāon inscription<sup>5</sup> shows that Ḥusain was alive in 925 A.H./1519 A.D. His son Nuṣrat Shāh began to issue coins in the same year.<sup>6</sup> Thus it is conclusively proved that 1519 A.D. is the last year of Ḥusain Shāh's reign.

We have seen that Ḥusain was fighting against all the kingdoms that surrounded Bengal. It is really surprising that he could maintain the independent status of Bengal even without entering into any military or political alliance with any one of these powers. His failure at the Assam frontier does not appear to have adversely affected the political life of Bengal. It only checked the progress of the Muslim arms in that direction. Ḥusain seems to have avoided a direct war with Sikandar by concluding a treaty with him ; but he succeeded ultimately in expanding his kingdom by occupying the parts of the territories that once formed the Sharqī kingdom.

1. The reign of Ḥusain's son, Nuṣrat, was characterized by the territorial expansion of Bengal in the north-western direction. *Infra*, sec. II of this chapter. See also my paper : "The Frontiers of Bengal under Husain Shahi rule." *B. P. P. op. cit.* p. 44.
2. *Op. cit.* vol. III, p. 271.
3. Firīshṭah : *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 302.
4. Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 135.
5. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 295, no. 31 ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 61 ; S. Ahmed *op. cit.* pp. 198-99.
6. Wright : *Catalogue* II, pp. 176-78, pt. II, pl. v, no. 206. Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* pp. 50-51, pl. VI, no. 134 ; Botham : *op. cit.* pp. 172-73, pl. IV, no. 6 ; S. Ahamed : *Supplement*, pp. 66, 67, 69 ; N. K. Bhattasali : *Taifoor Collection*, pp. 32-33, pl. v, no. 181 and *Hakim Habibur Rahman Collection*, pp. 26-28, pl. III, nos. 133 and 138.

The country enjoyed undisturbed security and peace during his regime and this was unquestionably due to his personal ability and the efficiency of his government. Even during the earliest part of his reign, he appears to have made an impression upon the mind of his subjects and captured their imagination to a great extent. Vijaya Gupta, a contemporary of 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain Shāh, who composed in 1494-95 A.D. a poem on the snake-cult popularly known as *Manasā-maṅgal*, has spoken highly of the achievements of the sultān. "Sultān Husain Shāh," he says, "is the *tilak*-mark of kings. He may be compared with Arjuna in fighting and as such he resembles the morning sun. The king rules the earth with the strength of his arm. Because of the protection offered by him, his subjects enjoy happiness regularly"<sup>1</sup> The glowing tributes which the poet has paid to the sultān seem justifiable, if we take into account his subsequent military, administrative and cultural attainments.

Husain's religious policy seems to have been free from narrowness and bigotry. His attitude towards the Hindus was marked by tolerance and liberalism. Some of the most important offices were held by the Hindus. On this point Bengali sources are clear and certain. Rūpa was the *Sākar Mallik*, and Sanātana, the *Dabir-i-Khās*, of the sultān. Rām Chandra Khān enjoyed a small estate in south-west Bengal. Similar was the case with the Majumdār family to which Hiranya Dās and Govardhan Dās belonged. Jagāi and Mādhāi were the *kotwāls* of Navadvīpa. Again Gopināth Vasu, his minister, Mukunda-dās, his private physician, Keshava Khān Chhatrī, the chief of his bodyguards and Anupa, in charge of mint, were Hindus. According to the *Rājamālā*, Guad Mallik was placed in charge of a Tippera expedition.<sup>2</sup> Some of the governors were patronizing the Hindu

1. *Op. cit.* p. 4; also quoted by me in *I.H.Q. op. cit.* p. 59.

2. For the mention of these officers, see, Bīndāvana-dās : *op. cit.* pp. 8, 82 (ādikhaṇḍa), 205 (madhya) and 316 and p. 350 (antya), *supra*, pp. 50 and 53. *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 151-52; Sukumar Sen : *Madhya Yuger Vāṅglā O Vāṅgālī*, pp. 14-15; Kṛṣṇadās

poets of the time. The names of Parāgal Khān and Chhuṭi Khān have become proverbially associated with those of Kavindra Parameshvara and Shrikara Nandi who prepared Bengali versions of the *Mahābhārata*.<sup>1</sup> The liberal policy adopted by Husain Shāh was followed by his successors. We find Hindu soldiers fighting in the army of Nuṣrat.<sup>2</sup>

Some writers have maintained that Husain Shāh oppressed the Hindus occasionally.<sup>3</sup> They base their arguments generally on the Suvuddhi Rāy episode, mentioned in the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, on the alleged destruction of the temples of Orissa by Husain and also on the view of Jayānanda that the Hindus of Navadvīpa suffered at the hands of the ruler. But their arguments seem to have been based on a superficial examination of facts. The Suvuddhi Rāy episode does not indicate any persistent policy adopted by the sultān, but shows only the influence exerted on him by his wife. The destruction of the temples of Orissa by the sultān does not necessarily prove that he was hostile to the Hindus, for such destruction may take place in the wake of military operations attended by chaos and confusion. What Jayānanda has said may be summarized in the following lines : the followers of the sultān informed him that the Brahmins of Navadvīpa would usurp the throne of Gauḍ.

Kavirāj : *op. cit.* pp. 76, 278 and 293. For a long list of seventeen Hindu officers of Husain Shāh, see S. Mukhopadhyay : *op. cit.* 264-84.

1. *Parāgali Mahābhārata*, quoted by D. C. Sen : *op. cit.* pp. 94-96 ; Shrikara Nandi : *op. cit.* p. 4 ; *infra* : Section on literature.
2. *Memoirs of Bābar*, vol. II, p. 673.
3. *Rajani Kanta Chakravarti* : *op. cit.* II, pp. 103, 106, 107 and 123 ; R. D. Banerjee : *op. cit.* II, pp. 306-307 ; D. C. Sen : *op. cit.* p. 93 and Tamo Nash Das Gupta : *Aspects of Bengali Society from Old Bengali Literature*, p. 92 ; S. Mukhopadhyay : *op. cit.* p. 300 ff.



Seized by anger, the sultān ordered Navadvīpa to be destroyed. The castes of the Brahmins were desecrated and the lives of many of them taken. The religious activities of the Hindus were suspended and the normalcy of the life of Navadvīpa was seriously affected. Chaos and confusion were reigning supreme so that Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭāchārya migrated to Benares, leaving his brother Vidyā-vāchaspati at Gauḍ.<sup>1</sup>

If we analyse the Bengali text, we find that the Brahminical section of Navadvīpa believed that the throne of Gauḍ would be occupied by the Brahmins—a fact corroborated also by Brndāvana-dās.<sup>2</sup> Whatever might be the reason for this way of thinking, this was sufficient to arouse anger in the sultān who wanted to put an end to the spirit of sedition pervading the Brahminical society of Navadvīpa. This explains why we find him in the above account oppressing the Brahmins only to the exclusion of other classes of Hindu population. One may question the measures he adopted against the Brahmins; but what he did, was meant to stamp out sedition in which communal feeling or religious zeal does not seem to have played any part. Moreover, Jayānanda says that this incident took place just on the eve of the birth of Shricaitanya in 1486 A.D. when Jalāl-ud-dīn Faṭḥ Shāh (1481-87) was the reigning sultān of Bengal. Husain Shāh cannot be held responsible for what was done by Jalāl-ud-dīn, an earlier ruler. Immediately on his accession to the throne of Gauḍ, Husain is said to have pillaged the city.<sup>3</sup> It seems that Jayānanda has referred to this incident in the course of which some Hindus of Gauḍ might have suffered.

That the sultān appointed a large number of Hindus to some of the key posts under him is a clear indication of the

1. Jayānanda : *Chaitanya-maṅgal*, pp. 11-12.

2. *Op. cit.* pp. 18 and 75.

3. *Supra*, p. 36.

liberalism with which he treated the Hindus. The catholicity of his mind is reflected in the Vaiṣṇava works which maintain that he had much respect for Shri-chaitanya whom he regarded as an incarnation of God.<sup>1</sup> The kindness and consideration which he showed to the Hindus have impelled the Hindu poets of the day to call him the *tilak*-mark of kings (*nṛpati-tilak*), the adornment of the universe (*jagatabhūṣaṇa*) and the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa (*Kṛṣṇa avatār*).<sup>2</sup>

It is numismatically and epigraphically established that the rulers of pre-Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal used to assume the title, "the helper of Islām and the Muslims".<sup>3</sup> It shows how closely they associated Islām with the state affairs. The sulṭān and his successors made a complete departure from this policy, dropping as they did this title from the coins. The *kalima* which appears only on a few coins may be regarded as a traditional feature of their coinage without having any religious significance. Again the names of the first four Caliphs found on the margin of a single coin<sup>4</sup> indicate simply their connection with the Saiyids of Arabia.

Most of the rulers of northern India imposed *jiziyah* or poll-tax on the Hindus. But the institution did not possibly prevail in Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal, for the Vaiṣṇava literature of the time which has devoted enough of space to the description of Hindu-Muslim conflict, does not mention it at all. The *zakāt* does not seem to have been realized by the government from the Muslims. In fact, Ḥusain Shāh and his successors were probably following a non-religious policy. This may be largely

1. Bṛndavana-dās : *op. cit.* antya, iv, p. 350 and Kṛṣṇa-dās Kavi-rāj : *op. cit.* madhya, i, p. 76.
2. Vijaya Gupta : *Op. cit.* p. 4 ; Shrikara Nandī : *op. cit.* p. 3 ; D. C. Sen : *op. cit.* pp. 74 and 94.
3. H. N. Wright : *Catalogue* II, pp. 154-163, pt. II, pl. II, nos. 52, 57, 66, 68 etc. See also other *catalogues*.
4. Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* p. 45, pl. v, no. 118.

due to the precarious circumstances under which the ruling authority was placed. The kingdom of Gaud was surrounded on all sides by a number of hostile countries. No sooner had the Lūdis disappeared from the political field of India than the rising tide of Mughal imperialism began to carry everything before it. Under these circumstances, Husain Shāh and his successors must have tried to strengthen the foundation of the state on the basis of the support and sympathy of the different sections of people irrespective of religion and creed.

To sum up, the reign of Husain Shāh constitutes a brilliant epoch in the history of medieval Bengal. Besides waging wars against the adjoining kingdoms, the sultān conferred all sorts of advantages on his subjects who acknowledged this by holding him in high esteem so that he is remembered even at present as a legendary hero of medieval Bengal.

## II

‘Alā’-ud-dīn Husain Shāh was succeeded by his eldest son Nuṣrat in 1519 A.D. Even during the life-time of his father Nuṣrat was associated with the administration of the country and was acquainted with the art of warfare. As an apprentice to his father, he seems to have acquired certain qualities which were necessary for the royal office. Some of his coins bear the dates 922 A.H./1516 A.D. and 923 A.H./1517 A.D.,<sup>1</sup> on the basis of which it may be suggested that Nuṣrat as a crown-prince, was allowed by his father to issue coins even before he actually ascended the throne.<sup>2</sup>

Significant political changes were taking place in contemporary northern India. Taking advantage of Ibrāhīm Lūdi’s weakness, the Lūhānis and the Farmulīs tried to parcel out

1. H. N. Wright : *Catalogue* II, pp. 177-78 ; A. W. Botham : *op. cit.* p. 172 ; Bhattashali : *Taifoor Collection*, p. 31, pl. v, no. 162 and *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 297, pl. ix, no. 10.
2. For a detailed discussion on this point, see appendix A ; cf. also *History of Bengal*, II, p. 152.

among themselves the entire territory from Patna to Jaunpur. A Lūhānī kingdom was established in Bihār.<sup>1</sup> This chaotic political condition gave a chance to Nuṣrat to extend his territory upto Azamgarh the inclusion of which place in his kingdom is proved beyond doubt by the Sikandarpūr inscription dated 1527 A.D.<sup>2</sup> Annexing the whole of Tirhut to Bengal, he placed it under the control of his brother-in-law, 'Alā'-ud-dīn and Makhdūm 'Ālam and Hājipūr situated on the confluence of the Gandak and the Ganges became his political head-quarters in north Bihār.<sup>3</sup> We suggested in the preceding chapter that these measures conformed to the military and strategic needs of Bengal. Kharid on the right bank of the Ghogra remained under Nuṣrat's sway so that Bābur, on his way to the east felt the necessity of requesting him for a passage through that region.<sup>4</sup>

Bābur inflicted a crushing blow to the Lūdī kingdom in the battle field of Panipat in 1526 A.D. This meant a threat to the sovereignty of Bengal. The Afghāns who escaped to Bengal were given not only nominal shelter, but also pensions and estates by Nuṣrat,<sup>5</sup> who, it seems, was actuated by humanitarian considerations. In 1527 A.D., the soldiers of Bābur advanced upto the Ghogra, after having plundered Kharid.<sup>6</sup> Seeing that the Afghāns were suffering defeat at every stage in their resistance against Bābur, Nuṣrat was probably at a loss as to the course

1. Badāyūnī : *op. cit.* I, pp. 328-330 ; Firish̄tah : *op. cit.* I, pp. 190-91 ; Niẓām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* II, p. 90 ; Aḥmad Yādgar : *Tārīkh-i-Salāṭīn-i-Afāghanah*, pp. 176-77 ; Ni'amatullāh : *Tārīkh-i-Khān-Jahān-Lūdī*, in Elliot and Dowson : *The History of India As Told By Its Historians*, vol. V, p. 105-6. cf : *History of Bengal*, II, p. 153.
2. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 296. According to this inscription, Kharid was under the control of a governor of Nuṣrat. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 153.
3. Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 136 ; *History of Bengal*, II, 153.
4. *Memoirs*, vol. II, p. 665.
5. Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 137 ; Niẓām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* III, p. 271 ; Firish̄tah *op. cit.* II, p. 302.
6. *Memoirs*, II, p. 544.

of action he should follow. As early as 1527 A.D., Bābur sent Mullāh Muḥammad Madhhab to the court of Gauḍ with a view to ascertaining Nuṣrat's attitude to his military policy in the east.<sup>1</sup> Without giving any direct reply to Bābur, Nuṣrat held up his envoy for about one year. Bābur was not sure of Nuṣrat's attitude even towards the end of 1528 A.D., for he said, "that explicit representation should be made as to whether the Bengalis were friendly and single-minded; that, if nothing needed my presence in those parts, I should not make stay, but should move elsewhere at once."<sup>2</sup> Since the whole situation was fraught with danger, Nuṣrat had to profess neutrality. On January 1, 1529, A.D. Bābur could know that Nuṣrat's attitude was "loyal and single-minded," whereupon he decided not to have any "move" on Bengal. In the same month, Nuṣrat's envoy, Ismā'il Mita, waited on Bābur, with presents and a letter from the sultān.<sup>3</sup> With this incident, the first phase of Nuṣrat's relation with Bābur was over. Bābur attached much importance to the neutrality of Nuṣrat, for he seems to have understood that an active coalition between Nuṣrat and the Afghān chiefs would completely frustrate his political ambition in the east. The sequel suggests that he was successful in preventing Nuṣrat from entering into an *entente* with the Afghāns.

It has been suggested that Nuṣrat actively helped the Afghāns against Bābur.<sup>4</sup> But this view does not seem to find support either in Bābur's auto-biography, or in sources like *Muntaḥab-ut-Tawārīkh*, *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, *Tārīkh-i-Firiṣhtah* and *Tārīkh-i-Salāṭīn-i-Afghānah*. To determine the exact nature of relationship between Nuṣrat and the Afghāns, it is necessary to discuss here Bābur's military achievements in Bihār and the adjoining regions. Early in 1528 A.D., some of the Afghān chiefs tried to resist Bābur's army at Qanauj but in vain.<sup>5</sup> Bābur

1. *Ibid.* II, p. 637.

2. *Ibid.* II, p. 628.

3. *Ibid.* II, pp. 637 and 640.

4. *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 153-57.

5. *Memoirs*, II, pp. 598 and 600.

proceeded along the Ghogra and conferred on Shāh Muḥammad Farmulī, the government of Sarān.<sup>1</sup> The persons who could stand on Bābur's way were Nuṣrat of Bengal, Maḥmūd Lūdī, Jalāl Khān Sharqī and Jalāl Khān Lūhānī of Bihār.

The detailed account of Bābur's relation with these political personalities found in the *Memoirs* clearly shows that Nuṣrat had hardly any connection with the anti-Mughal confederacy which was going to be formed in Bihār. Maḥmūd Lūdī occupied Bihār in 1529 A.D. from the Lūhānī ruler, Jalāl Khān who then proceeded to meet Bābur to whom he used to write "dutiful letters" from time to time,<sup>2</sup> probably expressing his intention to accept vassalage under him. What was Nuṣrat's reaction to these political changes, is not clearly known. Jalāl and his followers were detained at Hājīpūr by Nuṣrat's soldiers<sup>3</sup> who seem to have acted under the impression that Bābur's army reinforced by Jalāl might create danger for Bengal. Since Bābur had already advanced upto Sarān and Kharīd<sup>4</sup> which were under the control of Nuṣrat, it was natural on the part of the governor of Hājīpūr to try to weaken the enemy by adopting such a measure. This does not indicate that Nuṣrat had a previous understanding with Maḥmūd Lūdī as to the formation of an anti-Mughal coalition.

But the sequel is quite interesting to us. Having collected a body of 10,000 Afghāns, Maḥmūd placed himself at the head of an anti-Mughal confederacy which was joined by several prominent Afghan chiefs such as Bāyazīd, Bīban, Faṭḥ Khān and Sher Khān Sūr all of whom agreed to launch a three-pronged attack on the Mughals. Bāyazīd and Bīban proceeded to the north in the direction of Gorakhpur, while Maḥmūd accompanied by Faṭḥ Khān advanced along the banks of the Ganges towards Chunar and Benares. If the autobiography of Bābur

1. *Ibid.* p. 675.

2. *Ibid.* II, pp. 659 and 664.

3. *Ibid.* II, p. 664.

4. *Ibid.* II, pp. 561, 637 and 664.

is to be relied upon, the ultimate results of these expeditions were quite frustrating for the leaders of the coalition.<sup>1</sup> Had Nuṣrat played any role, direct or indirect, in this connection, it would have been mentioned in the sources at our disposal. A careful scrutiny of the details given above, seems to suggest that he was not a party to Maḥmūd's anti-Mughal scheme.

The Afghān leaders had conflicting interests so that it was hardly possible for them to stand for a common cause. Maḥmūd Lūḍī, Jalāl Lūḥānī and Jalāl Sharqī were vying with one another for curving out kingdoms for themselves. This explains why the coalition formed by Maḥmūd could not win the support of Jalāl Lūḥānī and Jalāl Sharqī both of whom had already recognized Bābur's supremacy by actively placing themselves at the Mughal conqueror's disposal.<sup>2</sup> Similar was the case with Sher Khān Sūr who accepted service under the Mughals.<sup>3</sup> Nuṣrat Shāh who was conscious of the inherent weakness of the coalition, does not seem to have joined it, for his active support to the Afghāns could have hardly served his self-interest. Realizing that an *entente* with the Afghāns who were fighting a losing battle, would give unnecessary provocation to Bābur, he appears to have evaded the so-called anti-Mughal confederacy. Again it is doubtful if Maḥmūd could at all think of inviting Nuṣrat to join his coalition, for the latter had territorial ambition in the north-west the partial fulfilment of which has already been noticed.<sup>4</sup> Thus the Bengal sultān's north-west frontier policy which was detrimental to Maḥmūd's interests was probably partly responsible for his exclusion from the anti-Mughal confederacy.

1. *Ibid.* II, pp. 651-52, 654 and 685.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 651-52, 669 and 676. It has been suggested by Qanungo that Bābur wanted to utilize Jalāl Sharqī against the Afghāns. See *Sher Shāh*, p. 61, footnote.

3. *Memoirs.* II, p. 659.

4. *Supra.* p. 69.

The sultān of Bengal ultimately realized that a direct conflict with the Mughals could hardly be avoided. Having occupied parts of Sarān and Kharid, they were now going to resume their eastward journey with a view to subjugating the eastern territories. Compelled by these circumstances, Nuṣrat felt the necessity of adopting certain practical measures to check the progress of the Mughal arms. He sent Quṭb Khān towards Bharaich to have certain engagements with the Mughals<sup>1</sup> of which no record is preserved in Bābur's autobiography. In April, 1529 A.D., Makhdūm-i-Ālam, governor of Hājipur, posted garrisons along the Gandak and held back a number of Afghāns who were going to join Bābur. These incidents combined with the treatment meted out to Jalāl Khān and his party made it sufficiently clear that Bābur's fighting with the Bengalis was "probable." Meanwhile, the Bengali army supported by a number of war-boats was waiting at the meeting point of the Ghogra and the Ganges to face any emergency. Bābur had already written a letter to Nuṣrat, containing "three articles"; but the latter's reply to it was "long in coming."<sup>2</sup> The Bengali envoy, Ismāil, was sent back to his master with the following memorandum: "We shall be going to this side and that side, in pursuit of our foe, but no hurt or harm will be done to any dependency of yours. As one of those three articles said, when you have told the army of Kharid to rise off our road and to go back to Kharid, let a few Turks be joined with it to reassure these Kharid people and to escort them to their own place. If they quit not the ferry-head, if they cease not their unbecoming words, they must regard as their own act any ill that befalls them, must court any misfortune they confront as the fruit of their own words".<sup>3</sup>

This passage explicitly shows that Bābur wanted to have a free passage through Kharid—a demand which Nuṣrat does not seem to have conceded.

1. Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 137. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 155.

2. *Memoirs*, II, pp. 663-65.

3. *Ibid.* p. 665; only one of the three articles is summarized here. Other two articles are nowhere specified; cf. : *History of Bengal*, II, p. 155.



The result was a foregone conclusion. Bābur now laid out an elaborate plan for the position to be taken by his generals in the approaching battle with the Bengalis.<sup>1</sup> His narrative taken together with whatever topographical details can be gathered from Rennell's map,<sup>2</sup> clearly shows that his troops were stationed on the northern and southern banks of the Ganges opposite to the Bengali camp at the confluence, along the left bank of the Ghogra and on the rising ground lying between the two rivers. The site of the battle shows that the Mughal soldiers with their camps up and down the stream of the Ghogra could attack the Bengal army from various directions. On the 4th May, 1529, the Mughal general Aughun Birdi, crossing the Ghogra, faced the foot soldiers of Nuṣrat who were ultimately put to flight, while another group of Bengali soldiers tried to fall on the Mughals under Zamān Mirzā, posted on the Bihār side of the Ganges. Next day's engagements decided the issue in favour of the Mughals and on the 6th May, Bābur crossing over into Kharid, "landed at a village named Kundih in the Nirhun pargana.....on the north side of the Saru ( Ghogra )".<sup>3</sup> The victory of the Mughals was largely due to the superiority of their military tactics and the advantageous position they took on the western side of the Ghogra. The battle of the Ghogra shows how isolated Nuṣrat stood in his fight against Bābur. Had he been a member of the anti-Mughal coalition of the Afghāns, some of their leaders would have sided with him on the Ghogra. This battle is significant, for it extended Bābur's territories upto the eastern side of the Ghogra and made the process of the subjugation of the Afghāns easier. It brought him to the outskirts of Tirhut, the gateway to Bengal, whence he could have easily proceeded to Bengal proper, along the banks of the Ganges, crossing the Gandak and the Kosi. But diplomatic

1. *Memoirs*, II, pp. 667-70.

2. See the map attached hereto. See also my paper in *B. P. P.* *op. cit.* p. 44.

3. *Memoirs*, pp. 671-74.





considerations seem to have prevented him from proceeding to Bengal before subjugating Oudh and Bihār. The Shāhzādah of Monghyr named Abū'l Fath and *lashkar wazīr* Husain Khān, consented to the three articles, dictated by Bābur, and concluded peace with him on behalf of the sultān of Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Thus Bengal was saved from an impending cataclysm.

The Persian sources which have given a brief account of Nuṣrat's reign, only mention his submission to Bābur,<sup>2</sup> but do not give the details of the relation between the two, as found in the *Memoirs*. It is stated that Nuṣrat was connected with the Afghāns in the battle of Daurah fought between Humāyūn and the Afghāns.<sup>3</sup> For a statement like this, we have no support in sources earlier and more reliable than Stewart. This writer says, "Although the king of Bengal, from the pusillanimity of his disposition, *did not take an active part in these scenes*, yet, regardless of his treaty with the emperor Babur, he gave every assistance in his power to Mahmud".<sup>4</sup> Thus, according to Stewart, Nuṣrat, who had no active role in the battle of Daurah, gave indirect help to Maḥmūd. Stewart does not mention the source of his information. Of the authorities consulted by him (*op. cit.*, XIII-XVIII), only *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, *Tārīkh-i-Firishṭah* and *Riḡāḍ* give scrappy accounts of the reign of Nuṣrat. But none of these sources mentions that he gave even indirect help to Maḥmūd Lūḍī in the battle of Daurah. The Afghān sources are completely silent on it. It is true that he gave shelter to a number of Afghāns whom Bābur drove away from Oudh and Bihār.<sup>5</sup> But we do not know whether he had any intention to set the Afghāns as a counterpoise to the rising Mughal power. 'Abbās Sherwānī, Badāyūnī, Firishṭah, Niẓām-ud-dīn, Gulbadan Begum and Jauhar have described the events connected with

1. *Ibid.* pp. 676-77.

2. Niẓām-ud-dīn: *op. cit.* III, p. 271; Salīm: *op. cit.* p. 137; Firishṭah: *op. cit.* II, p. 302.

3. *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 156-57.

4. *History of Bengal*, p. 134. (Italics are mine)

5. *Supra.* p. 69.

this battle.' According to these sources, the battle which took place at Daurah, on the bank of the Gumti, resulted in the death of Biban and Bāyazīd and defeat of Maḥmūd Lūdi. The contention that Sher Shāh played a treacherous role in it, has been refuted by Qanungo.<sup>2</sup> None of these sources seems to have given the correct date of this battle which is 1531 A.D. according to Qanungo<sup>3</sup> who has tried to fix it, relying on Gulbadan's account. It is quite interesting to notice that no one of the sources cited above, mentions the name of Nuṣrat in connection with this battle. Nuṣrat who was already convinced of the uncertain and vacillating attitude of the Afghāns, seems to have avoided joining them.

After the death of Bābur, it was rumoured that Humāyūn was going to attack Bengal. Nuṣrat sent his envoy Malik Marjān, to Baḥādur Shāh of Gujrāt with a view to concluding a friendly alliance with him. Baḥādur's response to this proposal was quite favourable for Nuṣrat, for the former received the Bengali envoy at the fort of Mandū and presented to him a special robe of honour.<sup>4</sup> Bengal had commercial relation with Gujrāt. The political relation which was about to take place between the two countries, was largely due to the antipathy of their rulers to a common enemy, for, like Nuṣrat, Baḥādur Shāh had sufficient political reason to be hostile to Humāyūn. But Nuṣrat died before the alliance could materialize.

1. 'Abbās : *Tārīkh-i-Sher Shāhi*, in Elliot and Dowson : *op. cit.* iv, pp. 346-50 ; Aḥmad Yādgar : *op. cit.* pp. 184-85 ; Badāyūnī : *op. cit.* i pp. 361-62 ; Firishtah : *op. cit.* i, pp. 213 and 225 ; Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* ii, pp. 97-98 ; Gulbadan Begum : *Humāyūn Nāmāh* ; p. 115 and 29 of the Persian text appended to the Eng. tran. and Jauhar : *Tadhkirat-ul-wāqī'āt*, p. 3. See also Qanungo : *op. cit.* pp. 72-75.

2. *Op. cit.* pp. 72-75.

3. *Ibid.* p. 78 ; footnote.

4. Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* iii, p. 271. Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 138 and Firishtah : *op. cit.* ii, 302.

Bengal's hold on Kāmṛūpa and Kāmṭa was probably unaffected till the end of the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh. This sultān was so much preoccupied with the affairs of the north-western frontier that he had hardly any opportunity to pay attention to Assam. The Muslim governors of Kāmṛūpa and Kāmṭa who seem to have acted largely on their own initiative, launched several expeditions against the Ahoms without receiving any help from the sultān of Gaud. One of such military operations started in 1532 A.D. under a general named Turbak who compelled the Ahoms to fall back on the fort of Sala after having occupied Temeni. The Ahom king appointed Chao-Shenglung commander-in-chief and stationed soldiers at Barnadi, while the Muslims advanced to Kaliabar where they halted for the time being.<sup>1</sup> Nuṣrat who died in 1532 A.D. could not see the conclusion of Bengal's war with Assam.

The reign of Nuṣrat Shāh marked the beginning of the process of disintegration of the Husain Shāhi regime, which found its culmination in the reign of Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Maḥmūd Shāh. In the north-west, he had to cede the area west of the Gandak, to Bābur who is known to have ruled over Sarān and parts of Kharid. Bengal's frontier was thus pushed back to the Gandak. He does not appear to have suffered any territorial loss at the eastern and north-eastern frontiers. What happened in the south-west, is not clearly known. Two Santoshpur inscriptions dated 938 A.H./1530-31 A.D.<sup>2</sup> clearly indicate

1. *Ahom Burañji*, ed. G. C. Barua, pp. 68-69. This account tallies with what is found in other *Burañjis* reproduced by S. N. Bhattacharya : *Mughal North-East Frontier Policy*, pp. 89-90. Turbak's expeditions against the Ahoms have been briefly narrated in other *Burañjis*. See *Ahom Burañji*, ed. S. K. Bhuiya, pp. 25-26. *Deodhāi Ahom Burañji*, ed. S. K. Bhuiya, pp. 27-28. Cf. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 158.
2. *E.I.* 1951-52, pp. 24-25, pl. XI, a & b. (Arabic and Persian Supplement). See my paper in *B.P.P. op. cit.* p. 46.

that the region beyond the river Dārakeshvar, was included in Bengal. One may well imagine that the Orissan ruler Pratāp Rudra was trying to expand his dominions at the expense of Nuṣrat's kingdom—the details of which can perhaps never be known.

Nuṣrat Shāh possessed certain noble virtues which could hardly be found in the rulers of the time. The kind and benevolent treatment which he meted out to his own brothers and also to the Afghān refugees by raising them to important ranks, is an indication of the humanitarian aspect of his character which, however, underwent a complete metamorphosis towards the end of his life.<sup>1</sup> Compared with his illustrious father, 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain Shāh, he appears to be a man of pusillanimous disposition. But while judging his achievements, one may well bear in mind the precarious nature of the circumstances under which he was placed. The weakness of his position was largely due to the uncertain character of Afghān politics and the superiority of the Mughal tactics. Nuṣrat gave direct patronage to the cause of Bengali literature in which his name finds repeated mention. While visiting the tomb of his father at Gauḍ, he is said to have been killed by one of his slaves.<sup>2</sup>

### III

The numismatic evidence suggests that Nuṣrat nominated his younger brother, Maḥmūd for succession.<sup>3</sup> But it is proved beyond doubt that he was succeeded by his young son Firūz and not by his brother Maḥmūd. Regarding the accession

1. It said that he turned quite tyrannical towards the end of his reign. Firīṣṭah : *op. cit.* II, p. 302 ; Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 138.
2. Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 138. Firīṣṭah says that he was unable to ascertain whether Nuṣrat was killed or died a natural death ; *op. cit.* II, p. 302.
3. Maḥmūd issued coins in his own name even in the reign of Nuṣrat. For a complete discussion on this point, see appendix-A.

of Fīrūz, the *Riyāḍ* has the following.<sup>1</sup> "When Nuṣrat Shāh drank the disagreeable syrup of death, his son Fīrūz Shāh, by the counsels of the grandees, ascended the throne." A powerful group of nobles seems to have placed Fīrūz on the throne of Gauḍ, ignoring the claim of Maḥmūd. We can well imagine that on the question of succession, the nobles were divided into two parties, one supporting the claim of Maḥmūd and the other standing by Fīrūz. Fīrūz Shāh had a very brief reign, for Maḥmūd who could hardly be satisfied with the obscure position to which he had been reduced, is said to have murdered him soon afterwards.<sup>2</sup>

Bengal's war with Assam seems to have continued in the reign of Fīrūz who had hardly any direct connection with it. The Muslim general Turbak whose exploits in Assam have already been noticed, made an attempt on the Ahom fort at Sala, from his camp at Geeladhari. The Ahom soldiers defended the fort quite heroically, while the Muslims burnt the houses around Sala and killed several Ahom generals on the field of battle. Finding that Sala could not be surprised by following the land-route, the Muslims now changed their strategy. Advancing both by land and sea, they surrounded the Ahom fort. The siege dragged on for three days and nights and the naval engagement which took place, resulted in the victory of the Ahoms. A Muslim naval officer named Tāju made another attempt to storm Sala, but was defeated at Duimunihila. The result of the battle was quite disastrous for the Muslims who lost their general Shangāt together with twenty five hundreded soldiers and twenty ships. One Husain Khān backed by cavalry, infantry and elephants came to reinforce Turbak. Coming down to the Dikrai river, the Muslim soldiers engaged themselves in a serious encounter with the Ahoms at whose hands they suffered a disastrous defeat. Towards the end of 1533 A.D., Husain Khān tried to attack the Ahoms near

1. Eng. tran. p. 137 ; cf. text, p. 139.

2. *Ibid.* p. 139.



the Bharali river, but was defeated and killed.<sup>1</sup> Thus the attempt of the Bengal sultāns to subjugate the upper Brahmaputra valley ended in a complete failure. The defeat of the Muslims must have been largely due to lack of help from Gaud and their weakness in naval force. Their failure in Assam had far-reaching consequences. They could no longer retain their hold on Kāmṛūpa and Kāmta. Vishva Siṁha who organized the Koch power appears to have put an end to the Muslim rule in Cooch Bihar. Bengal was thus reduced to her original position.

Numismatic and epigraphic evidences do not tell us anything about the achievement of Fīrūz as a ruler beyond the fact that he assumed the title, 'Alā'-ud-duniyā-wā'd-dīn Abū'l Muẓaffar Fīrūz Shāh, while in a metrical romance called *Vidyā-sundara*,<sup>2</sup> the poet Śrīdhara has made repeated mention of the name of Fīrūz with gratitude and admiration. The poet speaks very highly of the prince in the following lines: "The beautiful son of the king Nāṣir Shāh (Nuṣrat Shāh) is a bee which enjoys (the honey of) the lotus of all arts. King Fīrūz is a good-natured man possessing certain pleasing virtues".<sup>3</sup> Another colophon of the *Vidyā-Sundara* reads: "The beautiful son of the king of kings (Nuṣrat) is liberal and wise like Karṇa. The poet Śrīdhara says that Fīrūz Shāh is endowed with five qualities".<sup>4</sup> Making sufficient allowance for poetic exaggeration, it may be mentioned here that this eulogy has some truth in it. That he was a good lover of arts is proved by the fact that he had a genuine interest in literature—a quality which he must have inherited from his predecessors. The nobles who preferred him to Maḥmūd for the throne of Bengal, seem to

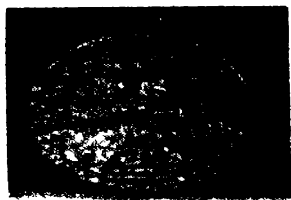
1. *Ahom Burāñji*, ed. G. C. Barua, pp. 69-73. See also Gait: *op. cit.* pp. 90-92. S. N. Bhattacharya: *op. cit.* pp. 90-92.

2. Abdul Karim Sāhityavishārad: *Gauḍeshvarer Ādeshe Rachta Vidyā-sundara*: S.P.P. 1344 B.S. pp. 22-24. See also the text of the *Vidyā-sundara* in *Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1364, B.S. I, pp. 118, 120, 123, 125, 129, 131, 132 and 133.

3. S.P.P. 1344 B.S. p. 24; *Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1364 B.S. I, p. 120.

4. S.P.P. 1344 B.S. p. 24; *Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1364 B.S. I, p. 125.

Plate I (Coins)



Coins of -Alā'-ud-dīn Firūz



have been influenced in their decision by the humanitarian qualities which Fīrūz possessed. But the cruel hand of the murderer put an end to what appeared to be a brilliant reign.

A good deal of controversy has centred on the problem of the exact duration of the reign of Fīrūz. Salīm holds that he reigned for three years.<sup>1</sup> But Charles Stewart who wrote his *History of Bengal* before the publication of the *Riyāḍ* in the Bibliotheca Indica series, mentions 'three months' as the duration of the reign of Fīrūz.<sup>2</sup> This view is accepted by the scholars of our time,<sup>3</sup> for they think that Stewart who has based his work mainly on the *Riyāḍ*, must have found 'three months' mentioned in the manuscript copy of the *Riyāḍ* he consulted. These scholars think that the coins and a single inscription which are the surviving records of the reign of Fīrūz, are dated 939 A.H. But this view is not correct. Although many of his coins bear the date 939 A.H./1533 A.D.,<sup>4</sup> the Dacca Museum collection includes two coins of Fīrūz which clearly show the date 938/1532.<sup>5</sup> Three inscriptions<sup>6</sup> show that 938/1532 is also the last regnal year of Nuṣrat Shāh. Thus it may be quite reasonably suggested that Fīrūz ascended the throne in 938/1532. The single inscription of the sulṭān found

1. *Op. cit.* p. 139.

2. *Op. cit.* p. 135.

3. Blochmann : *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 298 ; Abdus Salam. Eng. tran. of the *Riyāḍ*, p. 137, f.n.

4. H. N. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, p. 179, pl. VI, pt. II, no. 220 ; Bhattasali : *Taifoor Collection*, p. 35 ; *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pl. IX, no. 13.

5. Published by me in *J.A.S.P.* vol. IV, 1959, p. 178. As quite usual with some of the Bengal coins, inscriptions on either side of each of these coins are within a solid circle around which there is another circle of dots. Both were issued from the mint of Mu'aẓẓamābād ; see the pl. I. attached hereto.

6. *J.A.S.B.* 1874, p. 308 ; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 153 ; *E.I.* Arabic and Persian Supplement, 1951-52, pp. 26-27, pls. XI(a) and XI(b). Dani : *Bibliography*, pp. 72-73 ; S. Ahmed ; *Inscriptions*, pp. 229-32.

at Kalna<sup>1</sup> is dated Ist Ramaḍān, 939 A.H./27th March, 1533.A.D. Since Ramaḍān is the 9th month of the Arabic year, it is fairly certain that Firūz reigned for about nine months in 939 A.H. His murderer Maḥmūd issued coins in the same year.<sup>2</sup> As already shown, Firūz ascended the throne in 938/1532. If he had occupied the throne even in the last month of 938 A.H., he must have ruled at least for nine months. This contention finds direct support in Buchanan Hamilton's Pāṇḍuā manuscript according to which "his (Nuṣrat's) son Firuz Shah governed nine months, when he was killed by his uncle Mahmud Shah."<sup>3</sup>

## IV

The process of disintegration which started in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh, found its culmination in the reign of Maḥmūd who could hardly check the centrifugal forces operating in different parts of his kingdom. The governors who were placed in charge of the outlying regions seem to have assumed virtual independence. In the south-east, a realignment of political powers appears to have taken place. Khudā Bakhsh Khān, who was probably a governor and general of Maḥmūd<sup>4</sup> began to behave like a vassal ruler, having extended his sway over the region lying between the Karṇaphuli and the mountains of Arakan which is marked as Estado Do Covasdocam in the map of de Barros.<sup>5</sup> From his headquarters at Sore he was acting largely

1. *J.A.S.B.* 1872, pp. 132 and 332 and 1873, pl. vii, no. 2. Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 75 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, pp. 234-35 ; collected by Miss Manira Khatun, the inscription is now lying in the Indian Museum, Calcutta ; *J.N.S.I.* xxii, p. 213, f.n. 6.
2. H. N. Wright : *Catalogue* ii, p. 179 ; Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* p. 55 ; Bhattasali : *Taifoor Collection*, p. 36, pl. v, no. 195 ; *J. A. S. B.* 1874, p. 309, pl. xiii, no. 10.
3. *Op. cit.* ii, p. 619 ; see my paper in *J.A.S.P.* 1959, pp. 179-80.
4. Campos : *op. cit.* p. 42.
5. For the geographical position of this estate which includes Chachuria or modern Chakaria, see the map of de Barros attached

on his own. De Barros gives the following details about him : "The Estate of Codovascam, a Moorish prince and a great Lord, is between Bengalla and Arcacam. The Bengallas reckon it to be within the bounds of their Kingdom, and that of Tipora as well, but these lands being very mountainous the Bengallas say that certain powerful Lords therein have risen against the King of Bengalla, and whereas there was ever hatred and rivalry between the Bengallas and the Tiporitas, as there is wont to be between neighbour Kingdoms, when one claims to be greater than the other, the Tiporitas allied themselves with those of the kingdom of Cou, also unfriendly to the Bengallas."<sup>1</sup> This passage shows that Bengal's hold over the estate of Khudā Bakhsh Khān was not perhaps undisputed. There was intense rivalry between Bengal and Tippera over the possession of this place and the latter very often allied herself with the kingdom of the Chakmas with a view to weakening Bengal's hold on the south-east. This was probably the continuation of the hostilities between Bengal and Tippera, which had assumed a significant magnitude during the time of Husain Shāh. Details of the relation between the two countries during the reign of Mahmūd can perhaps never be known, for the *Rājamālā* is completely silent on it and de Barros is the only source of our information. But the scrappy details supplied by de Barros suggest that Tippera,

hereto. The regions beyond the Matamuhari river and the hills of Arakan which formed the south-eastern boundary of Bengal have been shown as Reino De Arracam.

1. Extracts from *Da Asia*, reproduced in *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, II, appendix-I, p. 245; see also Faria y Souza : *Portuguese Asia*, I, p. 416; My paper in *B.P.P. op. cit.* pp. 48-49. Khudā Bakhsh Khān was helped by the Portuguese in fighting against a neighbouring chief. But he did not hesitate to imprison them subsequently at his headquarters at Sore. When Sher Khān occupied Gaud, he tried to take possession of Chittagong town; but Nuno Fernandes Freire, the Portuguese agent at Chittagong, helped Khudā Bakhsh's rival, Amirzā Khān; Campos : *op. cit.* pp. 31-32 and 42; See also Faria y Souza : *op. cit.* I, p. 314.

taking advantage of Maḥmūd's weak position in the north-western frontier, had made a daring bid for expanding her territories at the expense of Bengal. How the kingdom of Arakan reacted to this situation is not known. What fate befell Khudā Bakḥsh, is also equally uncertain. But from Castanheda's description,<sup>1</sup> it appears that he could govern his estate until Bengal was finally occupied by Sher Khān Sūr. That he could hold out against countries like Arakan and Tippera, is a sufficient proof of his ability and strength which were, in a large measure, due to "the military discipline and artillery" of the Moors, spoken of highly by de Barros.<sup>2</sup> To these developments in the south-east, Maḥmūd does not appear to have made any direct contributions.

To a student of history, however, the affairs of the north-western frontier of Maḥmūd's kingdom, are of immense interest. Having rebelled against the sultān, Makḥdūm 'Ālam, the governor of Hājipūr, entered into a friendly alliance with Sher Khān, the deputy of the Luhānī ruler of Bihār. Maḥmūd sent Qutb Khān, the governor of Monghyr in 1533, against Makḥdūm, ostensibly to attack Bihār. Sher Khān tried in vain to dissuade the sultān of Bengal from following this course of action. Qutb Khān was defeated and slain by Sher Khān who now increased his strength by acquiring Bengal's treasures.<sup>3</sup> For Maḥmūd, this was a military defeat ultimately resulting in a serious diplomatic catastrophe. Neither Sher Khān nor Makḥdūm, could any longer be won over to Bengal's side. The possibility of the formation of an anti-Mughal coalition was thus lost for ever.

1. Campos : *op. cit.* p. 42.

2. *Op. cit.* II, p. 245.

3. Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* II, p. 94 ; Salīm : *op. cit.* pp. 139-40 ; Aḥmad Yādgar : *op. cit.* p. 180 ; 'Abbās in Elliot and Dowson : *op. cit.* IV, p. 333 ; Firīṣṭah : *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 223 ; Badayūnī : *op. cit.* I, p. 360 ; *History of Bengal*, II, p. 160.

Mahmūd sent an army against Maḥdūm 'Ālam who was willing to depend largely on Sher Khān's help. Sher was quite ready to join him personally at Hājipur ; but this was not possible. Jalāl Khān and his Lūhānī supporters held him back so that he had to send one of his representatives to Maḥdūm. The engagement which followed ended in Maḥdūm's defeat and death.<sup>1</sup> The attitude taken by the Lūhānīs to this incident seems to indicate that they had already come to an understanding with Mahmūd with a view to taking concerted action against Sher Khān. Mahmūd does not seem to have benefited by Maḥdūm's death, for with the removal of that powerful governor, the entire trans-Gandak region was now open to both the Afghāns and the Mughals.

The developments which were taking place in the Lūhānī court of Bihār, were quite significant. The Afghāns seem to have been divided into two hostile groups, viz., the Sūrs united under the leadership of Sher Khān and the opposing group consisting of the Lūhānīs supporting their royal patron, Jalāl Khān Lūhānī. When their attempts to kill Sher Khān failed, they advised Jalāl to accept vassalage under Mahmūd of Bengal. On the pretext of attacking Bengal, Jalāl proceeded to meet Mahmūd who now sent an army consisting of artillery, cavalry and infantry, under Ibrāhīm Khān, to attack Bihār. The battle which took place in 1534 on the plains of Surajgarh, resulted in the defeat and death of Ibrāhīm and Jalāl had to go back to Mahmūd.<sup>2</sup> Impatient of Sher's control, Jalāl had joined Mahmūd to get rid of him with the help of the sultān of Bengal. But his desire was never fulfilled. His flight to Bengal paved the way for Sher's ascendancy in Bihār. Mahmūd had helped him

1. Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 140. 'Abbās : *op. cit.* in Elliot and Dowson : iv, p. 334 ; *History of Bengal*, II, p. 160.
2. Aḥmad Yadgār : *op. cit.* pp. 181-82 ; Niẓām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* II, pp. 94-95 ; 'Abbās : *op. cit.* pp. 338-42 ; Firīshṭah : *op. cit.* I, pp. 223-24 ; Badāyūnī : *op. cit.* I, 360 ; *History of Bengal*, II, p. 161.



with the dual object of punishing Sher, the helper of Makhdūm and of acquiring parts of Bihār. But Jalāl's defeat spoiled his ambition. The battle exposed the weakness of Maḥmūd's army and the strength of his opponent. Thus the battle of Surajgarh was not without its significance.

Taking advantage of Humāyūn's preoccupation with Gujrāt in 1535, Sher annexed the territories upto Bhāgalpur. In 1536, he appeared before the Teliagarhi which was defended by the Bengali garrisons assisted by the Portuguese soldiers. Finding that entry into Bengal through this pass was almost impossible, he placed a body of troops there under his son, Jalāl and unexpectedly appeared before Gauḍ via Jharkhand. Maḥmūd who was extremely terrified at Sher's sudden approach, tried to buy off his hostility by a heavy indemnity, although he was advised by the Portuguese to hold on till the help from Goa was available. Sher Khān now extended his territories upto Teliagarhi<sup>1</sup> which was rightly regarded, in those days, as the gateway to Bengal.

By this time, another new force was operating in the political and economic life of Bengal. The Husain Shāhi period of Bengal's history witnessed the introduction of the Portuguese power in this country. Maḥmūd's predecessors, Husain and Nuṣrat were not probably sympathetically disposed towards the Portuguese who wanted trading facilities in Bengal. Affonso de Mello and Duarte de Azevedo who landed in Chittagong in 1532 ostensibly "to open commerce with Bengal", were not kindly received by the sultān at whose instigation, many of the Portuguese were killed in Chittagong. Mello and Azevedo were kept confined. In 1534, Nuno de Gunha, the Portuguese governor

1. Aḥmad Yādgār: *op. cit.* p. 183; 'Abbās: *op. cit.* pp. 355-56; Campos: *op. cit.* pp. 38-39; Salīm: *op. cit.* p. 140; Faria y Souza: *op. cit.* I, pp. 419-20. For the identification of the route followed by Sher Khān, see Qanungo, *op. cit.* pp. 120-24; *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 162-63, f.n. 2.

of Goa, sent Antonio de Silva Menezes to Bengal, demanding from the sultān, an explanation of his attitude towards the Portuguese and the immediate release of Affonso de Mello. But nothing could improve Bengal's relation with the Portuguese till Maḥmūd was forced to depend on the military assistance of the Portuguese to check Sher Shāh's attack. In 1537, the Portuguese governor let him know that he was incapable of helping him immediately but that he could "assuredly" do so in the following year. Maḥmūd had already allowed them to build fortresses and factories at Chittagong and Sātgāon. The right to have custom-houses at these trade centres together with that of collecting rent from the local people greatly enhanced the power of the Portuguese in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Short-sighted as he was, Maḥmūd could hardly realize the extent of the economic drainage that such an extravagant concession was going to cause to his kingdom. The political stability of the country was going to be jeopardized as a result of "the first establishment of the Portuguese in Bengal, almost simultaneously in Chittagong and Sātgāon."<sup>2</sup> Bengal's commercial interests which were quite carefully safeguarded by 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain Shāh and Nuṣrat Shāh, were thus easily sacrificed by their incompetent successor Maḥmūd Shāh.

In 1537, Sher Khān's position was far better than what it had been in the previous year, for he was not only the *de facto* ruler of Bihār, but also the absolute master of the Teliagarhi pass. Imprudent and imbecile as he was, Maḥmūd of Bengal was no match for Sher, nor could emperor Humāyūn stand comparison with him. This is what was illustrated by subsequent developments. Sher came to Gauḍ for the second time and demanded a large sum of money from Maḥmūd as annual tribute. The latter having refused to pay this, he besieged Gauḍ. When Humāyūn proceeded towards Chunar with a view to laying siege to it, Sher left Jalāl Khān and Khwās Khān to continue the siege of Gauḍ and hurried to Chunar to keep the

1. Campos : *op. cit.* pp. 33-40 ; Faria y Souza : *op. cit.* I, pp. 417-20.

2. Campos : *op. cit.* p. 39.

Mughals engaged there till the subjugation of Gauḍ was completely finished. When the Bengalis were going to face starvation, Maḥmūd came out of the fort, encountered the enemy, was wounded and defeated in the battle and fled towards Hājīpūr in North Bihār. Gauḍ thus fell into the hands of the Afghāns on the 5th of April, 1538. Maḥmūd sent an envoy to Humāyūn who was now at Barkunda after the capture of Chunar, requesting him to attack Sher's army in Bengal. Joining Humāyūn at Darwespur, he now proceeded towards Bengal. Arriving at Kahlgaon, he came to know of the execution of his two sons by the Afghāns at Gauḍ, when the unfortunate sultān of Bengal died in utter mental affliction.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the independence of Bengal came to an end in 1538. Maḥmūd did not have the competence to utilize to his advantage the political legacy left behind by his illustrious predecessors. He had neither diplomatic foresight, nor any practical approach to the political problems which beset Bengal's life in his reign. Had he been able to win over the Portuguese to his side earlier than 1537, their services

1. Salim : *op. cit.* pp. 140-44; Gulbadan : *op. cit.* pp. 133-34; Persian text (appended to the translation) : pp. 39-40; Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* II, pp. 41 and 99; Firīshṭah : I, p. 225; 'Abbās : *op. cit.* text, ed. Imamuddin p. 103ff. Campos : *op. cit.* pp. 40-41; Qanungo : *op. cit.* pp. 160-62. Arriving at Gauḍ through Teliagarhi, Humāyūn found it evacuated by the Afghāns. He had a luxurious repose in Gauḍ which he renamed Jinnatabad. The developments which were taking place in Bihār and northern India were simply detrimental to the imperial interests. Mīrza Hindāl rebelled in Agra and Sher was giving much trouble to the Mughals after having occupied the whole of South Bihār. Humāyūn had now to leave for Agra on the way to which he was defeated by Sher Khān at Chausa. After this incident, Sher reoccupied Bengal in 1539. Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* II, pp. 42-46 and 99-100; Gulbadan : *op. cit.* pp. 134-36; *Akbarnāma* : Bib. Indica text, I, pp. 159-60; Firīshṭah : I, p. 226; Badāyūnī : I, pp. 348-52; Jauhar : *op. cit.* pp. 17-25; 'Abbās : text, p. 124 ff. Campos : *op. cit.* p. 41. Salim : *op. cit.* pp. 144-47; cf. *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 163-64.

could have been fruitfully utilized in checking Sher's aggression. But he does not seem to have dreamt of such a course of action until circumstances forced him to take their help quite late. An early alliance with Sher or Humāyūn could have delayed the catastrophe of 1538 by a few years more. But Maḥmūd failed totally to have a grasp of the political situation.

The year 1538 marks the end of a significant period of the history of Bengal and the beginning of an era of chaos and confusion which troubled her life down to early seventeenth century.

### CHAPTER III

## *ADMINISTRATION UNDER HUSAIN SHAHI SULTANS*

ADMINISTRATION in the period in question is undoubtedly an interesting subject of study. Although materials at our disposal are of a fragmentary nature, an attempt may be made to throw some light on the different aspects of the Husain Shāhi state on the basis of numismatic and epigraphic evidences supplemented by the information gathered from contemporary Persian and Bengali sources.

It was not possible for the Husain Shāhis to build up an administrative structure entirely new. They found a system already at work which was elaborated and followed by the Ilyās Shāhis and the Abyssinians. All that Husain Shāh and his successors could do was to make some improvements upon the existing system. 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain Shāh, the founder of the dynasty who was closely associated with the administrative affairs of the country in the reign of Shams-ud-dīn Muẓaffar Shāh (1491-1493), the last of the Abyssinians, had no doubt the opportunity of studying the weak points of his administration. Thus it is quite likely that his personal experience greatly helped him in framing the administrative principles for the kingdom of Gauḍ.

He was conscious of the fact that administrative anomalies had worked against the stability of the state during the Abyssinian regime. This explains why we find him disbanding the *pāiks* and banishing the Abyssinians whose conspiracy and ambition had already convulsed the country. Husain addressed himself to the task of political settlement by transferring the seat of administration from Gauḍ to Ekdālā, appointing a number of efficient governors in different provinces and reducing disloyal elements to order.<sup>1</sup> These measures clearly indicate the sultān's care and anxiety for introducing administrative reforms in the country. Thus the circumstances under which the Husain Shāhis were placed suggest that they were greatly influenced by their predecessors in administrative details.

It is a well-established fact of history that Bengal formed very often a province of the Delhi Sultānate from the time of Bakhtiyār's invasion down to the first half of the fourteenth century when the Ilyās Shāhis successfully tried to assert the independence of this country. During this period Bengal administration was possibly a close copy of the administration of the Sultānate of Delhi. It may be inferred that some of the north Indian features had reached the Husain Shāhis through the administrative machinery of the Ilyās Shāhis and the Abyssinians. Although they do not seem to have exercised any dominating influence over the Husain Shāhi administration, they were gradually absorbed into the system. At the present stage of our knowledge, the original contributions of the Husain Shāhis can hardly be distinguished from what they had borrowed from the Ilyās Shāhis and the sultāns of Delhi. But some of the official titles of the Husain Shāhis are commonly present in the systems followed by the Ilyās Shāhis and the Turko-Afghān rulers of Delhi.<sup>2</sup>

The state built up by the Husainī rulers was in all possibility indebted to 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain Shāh for its guiding policy

1. *Supra.* ch. II, p. 36.

2. For an elaboration of this point, see below.

which was followed by his successors with occasional modifications. Nuṣrat, Fīrūz and Maḥmūd had hardly any necessity to completely alter the general policies adopted by the founder of the dynasty. The whole political machinery seems to have corresponded to the demand of the time and circumstances.

As the supreme head of the state, the sultān was the fountain-head of all powers. He was inseparably connected with the governmental structure so that the whole picture becomes unthinkable if he is left out. Since he had to personally lead some expeditions against Kāmṛūp-Kāmta and Jājnagar-Orissa,<sup>1</sup> it may be suggested that he had to occasionally delegate the exercise of his authority to an officer to conduct the administration during his absence from the capital. But this was surely a stop-gap measure and the final authority must have remained with the sultān.

‘Alā’-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh assumed the regal title, “Khalīfah of God by proof and evidence.”<sup>2</sup> We do not know if his successors had also similar titles. The assumption of this title by Ḥusain Shāh does not seem to be an accidental feature of his policy. The sultān simply revived the practice started by Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh and continued by some of the Ilyās Shāhi and Abyssinian rulers. In fact the title *khalīfatullāh* has got a long, constitutional and historical background. The legal authority of the Khalīfah has been explicitly recognized by ‘Iwāḍ Khaljī, Muḥitt-ud-dīn Yūzbak, Rukn-ud-dīn Kaikā’ūs, Shams-ud-dīn Fīrūz and

1. The wording of the Sylhet inscription of Ḥusain Shāh dated 918 A.H./1512 A.D., shows that he personally took part in these campaigns ; *supra*. p. 51.
2. This title is mentioned on some of the inscriptions of Ḥusain Shāh. See Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 63, footnote, 1, pp. 81 and 150 ; *J.A.S.B.* 1874, p. 302 and 1895, pp. 224-25 ; Ravenshaw : *op. cit.* p. 78, pl. 50, no. 11 ; E. G. Glazier : *Report on the district of Rangpur*, p. 108 ; Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 75 ; *E.I.* 11, p. 285 ; *V R.S. Monograph*, no. 7, p. 38, pl. xvi, 34 ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 45 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 151 ; cf : my review in *J.A.S.P.* 1958, p. 207.

the last ruler's sons, all of whom have mentioned the name of the 'Abbāsīd Khalīfah on their coins. These rulers have declared themselves as 'the Helper of the Commander of the Faithful.' With the foundation of the independent state of Bengal, the attitude of the Bengal sultāns towards the institution of Khilāfat underwent a slight change. Dropping the name of the Khalīfah from the coins, they began to inscribe such legends as 'Helper of the Commander of the Faithful' and 'Helper of Islām and the Muslims.' It was Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh who for the first time in the history of Bengal, declared himself khālīfatullāh or 'the Vicegerent of God'. This example was followed by some of the later Ilyās Shāhis and by at least one of the Abyssinian rulers.<sup>1</sup>

A similar process was at work in the Sultānate of Delhi. The sultāns of this part used to get recognition to their rule after having received the diploma of investiture from the Khalīfah of Baghdad. Of the Delhi sultāns, Iltutmish and Muḥammad bin Tughluq received such investiture. There were some sultāns who owed allegiance to the Khalīfah even without recognition from him. This explains why the name of Musta'ṣim continued to be mentioned on the coins issued from Delhi long after the death of that Khalīfah. Rukn-ud-dīn Ibrāhīm and 'Ala'-ud-dīn Khaljī declared their belief in the legal power of the Khalīfah by assuming the titles, *nāṣir-i-amīr-ul-mūminīn* and *yamīn-ul-Khilāfat* respectively. The Saiyids, the Lūdis and Bahmanī rulers followed similar procedure quite traditionally expressing their belief in the legal status of the Khalīfah. Quṭb-ud-dīn Mubārak Shāh of Delhi proclaimed himself 'the Khalīfah of the Sustainer of the two worlds', 'the most mighty Imām' and 'the Commander of the Faithful'.<sup>2</sup>

1. A. Karim : *Corpus*, p. 166 ff ; cf : my review in *J.A.S.P.* 1958, p. 207.

2. For a discussion on these points, see I. H. Qureshi : *The Administration of the Sultāns of Delhi*, p. 27 ff ; A. Karim in *J.N.S.I.*, xvii, ii, p. 88.



Thus the legal position of the 'Abbāsid Khalīfah was unquestionably established in India and also in pre-Mughal Bengal. With the destruction of the Khilāfat, different rulers were assuming the Khilāfat titles. It was in this political *milieu* that Husain Shāh of Bengal was flourishing. So the assumption of the Khilāfat title by him seems easily understandable. Since the institution of Khilāfat had played an important part in the sunni Muslim world, Husain Shāh possibly wanted to win the support of the sunnis of Bengal by assuming the Khilāfat title. This act thus fictitiously legalized his position as a ruler. Husain Shāh who had supplanted the Abyssinians might have otherwise been regarded as a usurper. Whatever might have been the political motive that actuated him to assume this title, it may be suggested here that Bengal had an apparently legal sovereign in the person of Husain Shāh. The reason why his successors did not not assume this title can hardly be ascertained.

There was no hard and fast rule of succession, nor was the law of primogeniture strictly enforced. This feature has been noticed by Bābur, Faria y Souza and Niẓām-ud-dīn.<sup>1</sup> The death of every sultān was followed generally by chaos and confusion. The nobles used to play an important part in selecting the ruler. In these circumstances, no regular rule of succession could be followed. Husain Shāh seems to have nominated Nuṣrat, as his successor to the throne of Bengal, for the latter issued coins in his own name in 1516.<sup>2</sup> This is a privilege which could be granted only to the crown-prince. It is suggested by some of the coins of Maḥmūd<sup>3</sup> that he was the heir-apparent. Although Nuṣrat could succeed his father to the Sulṭānate, his younger brother Maḥmūd could not succeed him, for the nobles raised Nuṣrat's son, Firūz to the throne of

1. *Memoirs*, vol. II, pp. 482-83 ; Faria y Souza : *op. cit.* p. 417 ; Niẓām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* III, p. 268.

2. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, pp. 177-78, nos. 211 and 212 (Bengal).

3. Appendix A.

Gaud after having cancelled the claims of Maḥmūd. Maḥmūd, however, asserted his right of inheritance by ascending the throne after having killed Fīrūz.<sup>1</sup> This irregularity in succession was a regular feature also in pre-Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal. In this connection we may notice a peculiar feature of the Ḥusain Shāhī administration. The crown-prince was probably allowed by the reigning sultān to issue coins in his own name.<sup>2</sup>

The ruler had several servants and officials attached to his person. There was a number of body-guards who were placed under a chief body-guard. Bengali sources give us the name of Keshava Khān Chhatrī who served as the Chief of the guards of Ḥusain.<sup>3</sup> Several palace guards were placed in the guard-room and on the band-stand. They were under the control of a commandant. The guards of Ḥusain replaced the *pāiks* who together with their commandants were playing an extremely mischievous role under the Abyssinians and the Ilyās Shāhīs by deposing or murdering one sultān and placing another on the throne.<sup>4</sup> There was a private physician or *antarāṅgā*<sup>5</sup> whose services were available for all medical purposes.

Epigraphic records show that there was a *sharābdār-i-ghair-mahallī*,<sup>6</sup> or 'the bearer of the cup outside the palace,' also known as *jāmdār-i-ghair-mahallī*.<sup>7</sup> This office existed also

1. *Supra*, ch. II, pp. 79 and 82.

2. See appendix A.

3. Bṛndavanadās : *op. cit.* p. 350 ; Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : *op. cit.* p. 76.

4. Salīm : *op. cit.* pp. 119-20, 126, 127 and 132-33 ; Firīṣṭah : *op. cit.* II, pp. 299 and 301-302 ; Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* III, pp. 268-70.

5. Sukumar Sen : *Madhya Yuger Vāṅglā O Vāṅgālī*, p. 8.

6. *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 106 ; *E.I.M.* 1929-30, pp. 12-13 ; Cunningham : *op. cit.* pp. 99-100 ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 57 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 190.

7. See the Sylhet inscription of Ḥusain Shāh, dated 911/1505, *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pp. 293-94 ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 53 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 169 ; see my review in *J.A.S.P.* 1958, pp. 208-09.

under the Abyssinians and Ilyās Shāhīs.<sup>1</sup> We do not come across this officer under the Sulṭānate of Delhi. Although the title is apparently of no significance, it was no doubt an important office. It was generally conferred on one of the local governors who used to accompany the ruler during his expeditions. His duty was presumably to supervise the drinks to be supplied to the ruler and this was a precaution against poison. As poison could be easily administered through drinks, the office was necessarily given to one who enjoyed the full confidence of the ruler. The expression, *sharābdār-i-ghair-mahallī* suggests that the sulṭān had another *sharābdār* inside the palace to look after drinks. This is what we practically find in the Delhi Sulṭānate where drink was generally served by the *sāqī-i-khāṣ*.<sup>2</sup>

The royal household required no doubt the services of various minor and major servants about whom nothing is known. The sulṭāns of Delhi had *wakīl-i-dār*, *amīr hājib*, *nā'ib bārbak*, *naqīb* and other officials whose duties were respectively to control the household affairs, to manage the ceremonies at the court, to act as sulṭān's deputy, to proclaim orders to the soldiers and to the populace and so on.<sup>3</sup> We may reasonably assume here that the Husain Shāhīs could hardly dispense with the services of similar officers whose official titles might have differed from those under the sulṭāns of Delhi. It seems that eunuchs and slaves were serving in various capacities in the royal household. In fact they were playing the roles of kings and kingmakers during the Ḥabshī regime. Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese traveller, has maintained that some of them enjoyed lucrative posts.<sup>4</sup> According to Nizām-ud-dīn, Malik

1. See the Sunārgaon inscription of Fath Shāh, dated 889 A.H./1484; *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 286; Cunningham, *op. cit.* p. 141. See the Tribenī inscription of Bārbak Shāh dated 860/1455; *J. A. S. B.* 1870, p. 290 and *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 273, f. n.
2. Minhaj: *op. cit.* 242.
3. I. H. Qureshi; *op. cit.* pp. 59-63.
4. Barbosa: *op. cit.* II, p. 147.

Marjān who was sent as envoy by Nuṣrat Shāh to Gujrāt was a eunuch.<sup>1</sup>

The ruler used to sit in *darbār* where he met the important nobles and officials, conferred occasionally honorary titles on them, presented robes of honour to the governors and appointed the high officials, generals and administrators.<sup>2</sup> It goes without saying that the powerful Husain Shāh and his successors must have had a magnificent court in a richly decorated hall to capture the imagination of the people.

Although we know nothing about the functions of the sultān, it may be maintained here that these must have included the protection of territories, collection of taxes, enforcing laws, maintaining order, appointment of officers and looking after the public interest. These have always been the functions of the royal office.

## II

The nobility played an important part in administration. It was composed of heterogeneous elements like Arabs, Pathans, Mughals and Bengalis.<sup>3</sup> The nobles used to receive high-sounding honorary titles like *khān-i-a'zam*, *khāqān-i-mu'azzam*,

1. Nizām-ud-dīn: *op. cit.* III, p. 271; see also Salīm; *op. cit.* p. 138.
2. According to the *Parāgalī Mahābhārati*, Husain Shāh did honour to Parāgal Khān, the newly appointed *lashkar* of Chittagong, by giving him a golden robe and horses; *op. cit.* quoted by D. C. Sen: *op. cit.* p. 94. Similar information is available in the *Ashvamedha Parva*, p. 3. Husain appointed and dismissed several generals during his Tippera expeditions; *Rājamālā*: pp. 22-28. This could be done obviously in a *darbār*, a vivid picture of which is available in Chinese accounts; *Si yang ch'ao kung tien lu*; *Sing ch'a sheng lan* and *Shu yu chou tseu lu*: tran. by Bagchi in *Viśva-bhārati Annals*, 1945, pt. I, pp. 121-22, 126-27 and 131.
3. Salīm: *op. cit.* p. 133. Bengali sources give us the names of the Hindu officers of the Husain Shāhīs.

*pahlawī-i-‘aṣr-wāz-zamān*, *ḵḵān-i-mu‘aẓẓam*, *majlis-ul-majālis*, *al-malik-ul-mu‘aẓẓam-wāl-mukarram*, *malik-ul-umarā’ wāl-wazarā*, *mahāpātrā-dhipātra* and so on.<sup>1</sup> They influenced the different departments of the government, as administrators, generals and sometimes as king-makers. The nobility does not seem to have had any hereditary character. Its influence considerably increased in the reigns of Fīrūz and Maḥmūd Shāh when the nobles were deciding the fateful issues of the day.<sup>2</sup> We shall suggest in a subsequent section of this work that at least some of them constituted rent-receiving interest in this country. It is fairly well-established that they were enjoying *jāgīr* in Mughal and pre-Mughal India. The nobles of Husain Shāhī Bengal do not seem to have been much different from their north-Indian counterparts. The somewhat feudal basis of Bengal administration under the Pālas and the Senas does not seem to have undergone any appreciable modification in the early period of Muslim rule. The system of government introduced by Bakhtiyār clearly indicates what may be called its feudal nature. Bakhtiyār divided the country into military holdings among a number of military officers also called *muqṭi’s*.<sup>3</sup> This type of government was at work even long afterwards. At the time of Bengal expedition, Fīrūz Tughluq is said to have promised an increase in grants of lands to the nobility and a similar increase in the land-holdings of the military officers. It appears that the *aqṭā’* or a similar system was prevailing in pre-Mughal Bengal. The military governors of the Husain Shāhī period perhaps enjoyed revenue assignments like the *muqṭi’s*. The tendency towards decentralization in Bengal administration noticed by Bābur, and the provincial *wazīr* depicted in Bengali literature as controlling revenue farmers, add strength to this suggestion. Bābur has mentioned that the *manṣabdārī*

1. These titles are found in the inscriptions of Husain Shāhī rulers, published in different journals and books which we have used in this work; see also my review of Dani’s *Bibliography*, *op. cit.* p. 210.
2. The nobles were responsible for bringing Fīrūz to power to the prejudice of Maḥmūd; *Riyāḍ*, pp. 139-40; *supra*, pp. 51-52.
3. Minhāj: *op. cit.* pp. 156-58.

system was prevailing in Bengal under Husain Shāhi sultāns<sup>1</sup>, for which statement we have no support in the contemporary sources. He seems to have confused the local land-lords and provincial governors of Bengal with *mansabdārs*.

### III

It was not possible for the Husain Shāhis to conduct the administration without the help of others. They had to depend on a number of officials for the smooth and prompt working of the governmental machinery. It seems that there were several departments, like those of finance, correspondence, police, judiciary and military affairs, though it is not clear whether their functions and jurisdiction were well-defined. These departments worked under the sultāns of Delhi and under Sher Shāh as well. We have hardly any reason to think that the Husain Shāhis could dispense with the services of these departments which are always necessarily connected with every administrative system.

The Prime Minister had some sort of controlling influence over the different departments. Saiyid Husain who was the *wazīr* and administrator of the affairs of the government under the last Habshī sultān, was directly responsible for reducing the pay of soldiers, starting the construction of a treasury and making extortionate demands of revenue from the subjects.<sup>2</sup> We find a similar officer named Habash Khān<sup>3</sup> who was connected with the financial and administrative affairs of Nāṣir-ud-dīn Maḥmūd II (1490-91). This is, of course, the information about the position of what may be called Administrator General in pre-Husain Shāhi Bengal. It may be conjectured here that the office was retained also by the Husain Shāhis.<sup>4</sup> From what has

1. *Memoirs*, II, p. 482.

2. Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 128 ; Firishṭah : *op. cit.* II, p. 301.

3. Salīm : *op. cit.* pp. 126-27 ; Firishṭah : *op. cit.*, II, p. 300.

4. In one of his works, Sanātana tells us that he was the *Mahāmantrin* or Prime Minister of Husain Shāh. S. K. De : *Early History of the Vaisṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, p. 110.

been stated by Salim and Firish<sup>1</sup>tab, it is quite clear that the office was closely connected with the finance and military departments at the centre and that the officer could occasionally act as the sultān's *alter ego*.

The department of correspondence was perhaps an integral part of the central secretariat. It was under the control of the *dabīr-i-k̲h̲lāṣ*<sup>1</sup> or private secretary who used to deal with all the correspondence between the sultān and his officials and tributaries or the rulers of the foreign countries. Since the *dabīr-i-k̲h̲lāṣ* had to occasionally deal with confidential correspondence, he is supposed to have enjoyed complete confidence of the ruler. This office had its counterpart in the administration of the Delhi Sultānate where it was "a stepping stone to the wazarat".<sup>2</sup> It seems that the *dabīr-i-k̲h̲lāṣ* was assisted in his activities by a number of subordinate *dabīrs*. The department needed the cooperation of the *kār-i-farmān*<sup>3</sup> whose duty was probably to issue royal orders to those whom they might concern and the *katibs* who had to copy different letters and documents. The inscription of an earlier period clearly shows that the *katib* sometimes won the title like *zarīn-dast* or 'golden-handed'<sup>4</sup> due to his proficiency in the different styles of writing.

The police department or *dīwān-i-kotwālī* which was placed in charge of the chief police officer or the *kotwāl-bakā'ī* is

1. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : *op. cit.* p. 76. See also *Chaitanya-bhāgavat* pp. 8 and 82.
2. I. H. Qureshi : *op. cit.* 86-88 ; cf : A. B. M. Habibullah : *op. cit.* p. 239.
3. See the Deotala inscription of Nuṣrat Shāh dated 1528 ; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 171 ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 70 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 222 ; cf : *J.A.S.P.* 1958, p. 208.
4. See the Devikot inscription of Sikandar Shāh, dated 1663 ; *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 105 ; Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 98 ; *E.I.M.* 1929-30, pp. 10-11, pl. vii (a) ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 12 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 35.

mentioned as a provincial department in the Devikot inscription<sup>1</sup> dated 1512. It may be quite reasonably inferred that this *dīwān* had its central counterpart also. This department had a number of subordinate *kotwāls* whose duties were to maintain peace and order and also to watch the movement of strangers in the city. It was connected with the criminal court presided over by a judge or *munṣif* who used to try criminal cases. There was probably a well-organized espionage system which kept the ruler regularly posted about what was happening in and around his territories. The spies or secret agents who were appointed by the ruler has been called *jāsu* or *dāni* in Bengali literature.<sup>2</sup> Thus this spy system helped the sultān a great deal in exercising effective control over the governors of the outlying regions of his kingdom.

Although we know nothing about the judiciary department of the Husain Shāhīs, it may be mentioned here that legal problems and Muslim traditions were interpreted by a learned man who was 'the chief of the lawyers and teachers of traditions', also known as *malik-ul-umarā' wā'l wazarā*, mentioned in the Sonārgāon inscription<sup>3</sup> of Nuṣrat Shāh. The convicts were confined to jail which was under a chief jailor.<sup>4</sup>

No information is available about the finance department. It may be easily understood that the vast revenue of the kingdom, its customs and other varieties of income were placed at the disposal of this department with which the prime minister was directly connected. Such was the arrangement made under the Turko-Afghāns and the Mughals. There was an officer

1. *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 106 ; Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 100. *E. I. M.* 1929-30, pp. 12-13, pl. viii (b) ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 57 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions* p. 190.
2. Bṛndāvanadās : *op. cit.* p. 316.
3. *J.A.S.B.* 1872, pp. 337-38 ; Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 144 ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 67 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 209.
4. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj ; *op. cit.* p. 205.



called *wazir-i-lashkar* in Gauḍ inscription<sup>1</sup> of Fath Shāh dated 1484, which appears to be a mistake for the terms *wazir wa sar-lashkar*, mentioned so frequently in the inscriptions of pre-Mughal Bengal. But the term is found in the Sylhet inscription<sup>2</sup> of Husain Shāh and also in the *Memoirs* of Bābur<sup>3</sup> where it appears as *lashkar wazir*. It appears possibly as *baḍa wazir* in the *Ahom Burañjī*.<sup>4</sup> Both the *Memoirs* and the *Burañjī* connect this officer with military affairs. It may, therefore, be mentioned that the officer dealt with the financial side of the military department.<sup>5</sup> It seems thus identical with the office of the *mīr bahāshī* or the Pay Master General of the Mughals. The officer had presumably to come in contact with the head of the finance department in connection with payment to the soldiers. Coins were struck in a mint at the capital and deposited in the treasury. There were a mint-master and a treasurer to look after the mint and treasury administration. A number of Husain Shāhi coins containing the term *Khazanāh*<sup>6</sup> indicates that they were issued direct from the central treasury.

1. *E.I.* vol. II, pp. 287-88; Abid Ali; *op. cit.* p. 87, pl. IV. Cunningham; *op. cit.* p. 65, pl. XXIII; Dani: *Bibliography*, p. 36.
2. *J.A.S.B.* 1922, p. 413, pl. IX; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, p. 25.
3. *Op. cit.* vol. II, p. 676; see also my review in *J.A.S.P.* 1958, p. 210.
4. *Op. cit.* ed. G. C. Barua, pp. 61 and 66.
5. In a succeeding section of this chapter, it has been suggested that the provincial governor of this period, known as *wazir*, dealt with the provincial finance in addition to his military functions hinted at by the term *sar-i-lashkar* appearing in a number of inscriptions. If any importance is attached to the financial significance of the term *wazir*, the expression *wazir lashkar* may be taken to mean the office of the Pay Master General of the army, and not probably that of war minister.
6. Lane-Poole: *op. cit.* pp. 44, 46 and 49, pl. V, nos. 108 and 116. H. N. Wright; *Catalogue*, II, pp. 172-74 and 176, pt. II, pl. V, nos. 167 and 181; Botham: *op. cit.* pp. 170-71 and 173, pl. II, no. 1.

The Husain Shāhi had a well-organized army<sup>1</sup> which was perhaps under the jurisdiction of the military department. The Husain Shāhi army was composed of infantry of *pāiks*, cavalry, artillery, navy and elephants.<sup>2</sup> Since the days of the

1. A rough idea about the numerical strength of the Husain Shāhi army may be gleaned from the following. Vasco da Gama remarked in 1498 : "Bengaula has a Moorish king and a mixed population of Christians and Moors. Its army may be about twenty-four thousand strong, ten thousand being cavalry, and the rest infantry, with four hundred war elephants". Quoted by Campos : *op. cit.* p. 25. This figure tallies with what has been given by Shihāb-ud-dīn Talish according to whom Husain Shāh attacked Assam with 24,000 soldiers ; *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 79, but the figure mentioned in the Bodleian ms., or. 589, fol. 35b, is 20,000. It appears that the sultān utilized the services of the whole army in his war with the Ahoms. This is impossible, for he must have left a considerable number of soldiers at the capital and also at the different frontiers as a precautionary defence measure against any possible external attack. The total strength of the army must have exceeded 24,000. The invading army of Nuṣrat Shāh who attacked the Ahoms consisted of 1,000 horse, one million men including the land and naval forces, a huge park of artillery and thirty elephants. *The Ahom Burāñji*, ed. G. C. Barua, pp. 67-68 ; Gait : *op. cit.* p. 90. One million is an incredible figure indeed ! This increase in the army of Nuṣrat may be explained in two ways, (a) The *Burāñji* has perhaps magnified the number of the Muslim soldiers. (b) It may otherwise be suggested that the numerical strength of the army had considerably increased under Nuṣrat, the change being due largely to the rising tide of Mughal imperialism which Nuṣrat was unsuccessfully counteracting. Besides a huge body of infantry and a number of elephants, Hājī Ilyās had a force of 90,000 cavalry ; *History of Bengal*, II, p. 108. It follows from Vasco da Gama's account, that Husain Shāh reduced the number to 24,000 while his immediate successor increased it so much so that it surpassed the Ilyās Shāhi army in number. In that case Nuṣrat had to raise the strength from 24,000 to one million. But this increase seems to be abnormal.
2. *The Ahom Burāñji*, ed. G. C. Barua, pp. 67-73 ; *Memoirs*, II,

first Ilyās Shāhī, Bengali *pāiks* were fighting with reckless valour. There were occasions when they tackled the political situation of the country which very often resulted in serious chaos affecting the normalcy of Bengal's life. Even when Bengal was a part of the Delhi Sultānate, she used to supply the best of the *pāiks* to the sultāns of Delhi.<sup>1</sup> According to Joao de Barros, Husain Shāhī *pāiks* used bows, arrows and guns.<sup>2</sup> Bābur who had the opportunity to meet the soldiers of Nuṣrat Shāh, has given an account of the disposition of the Bengali foot-soldiers in the battle field. The troops were generally drawn up into three or four divisions so that they might attack the enemy army in the flank and get to grips with them. Without breaking the array, the commander used to fling the foot-soldiers to the front and thus proceeded forward<sup>3</sup> This was a peculiarity of the battle array which naturally drew the attention of Bābur.

The cavalry was possibly the weakest part of the Husain Shāhī army. Since good horses were not available in this part, they had to always depend on foreign countries for the supply of horses. From the inscriptions of pre-Mughal Bengal, we know of the title of two cavalry officers, the *sar-i-lail*<sup>4</sup> and the *sipah sālār*,<sup>5</sup> the reading of the latter being, of course, of a doubtful nature. But the term *sipahsālār*, has been mentioned by Mahuan<sup>6</sup> who visited Bengal in the beginning of the fifteenth

pp. 671-73 ; *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, vol. II, p. 95 ; 'Abbās in Elliot and Dowson : *op. cit.* vol IV, pp. 339-342.

1. Baranī : *op. cit.* p. 593.
2. Campos : *op. cit.* p. 34.
3. *Memoirs*, II, p. 673.
4. See the Tribenī inscription of Bārbak Shāh dated 1455, *J.A.S.B.* 1870, p. 290 ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 21 ; S. Ahmed ; *Inscriptions*, p. 69.
5. The Mandāran inscription of Husain Shāh, dated 1494-95, contains the term *shāhlar mubārak*, *J.A.S.B.* 1917, p. 134. It seems that *sipah*, the first unit of the whole expression, has disappeared.
6. Mahuan's account : *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 532 ; see also Chinese account in *Viśva-bhārati Annals*, 1945, I, p. 118.

century. These two titles are not at all sufficient for the formation of an idea about the organization of the cavalry forces of the Husain Shāhis. But we may see how they have been used in the military organization of contemporary northern India. Several horsemen were usually under a *sar-i-khail*; a *sipahsālār* had several *sar-i-khails* under him; a number of *sipah-sālārs* was placed under an *amīr*; *amīrs* were subordinate to the *khāns*.<sup>1</sup> This was, of course, a theoretical arrangement which underwent many changes in practice and the term, *sipah-sālār*, was very often applied to the commander-in-chief. Whatever might have been the gradation of the cavalry officers in North India, we have no reason to think that Bengal accepted it without any modification. It appears that the commander-in-chief was known as *sipahsālār* and the *sar-i-khail* was the chief of the cavalry in Bengal. The cavalry organization made by the Ilyās Shāhis, continued under the Husain Shāhis.

Artillery was an important section of the army. Bābur has characterized it as a very effective part of the Bengal army.<sup>2</sup> De Barros says that the military supremacy which the sultāns of Bengal attained over the rulers of Arakan and Tippera was largely due to the efficiency of their artillery.<sup>3</sup> The *Ahom Burañjī* gives to the Bengalis the credit of "opening fire from their large guns and flint guns". In fact, cannon and guns used were of various sizes and the rulers of Bengal were reputed for fire-working.<sup>4</sup>

The admiralty department was an unavoidable necessity in Bengal which is covered by a network of rivers. The cavalry could ensure the hold over this country only for a period of six months, whereas the boat backed by the Bengali *pāiks* could command supremacy over the enemy in the rainy

1. Baranī : *op. cit.* p. 145 ; cf : A. B. M. Habibullah : *op. cit.* p. 268.

2. *Memoirs*, II, p. 672.

3. *Supra*, p. 84.

4. *Op. cit.* ed. G. C. Barua, pp. 68, 70, 72 and 73.

season covering the other half of the year. The sultāns of Delhi who had no strong navy used to attack Bengal generally in the dry season, for no effective head-way could be made during the rainy season. Since the time of 'Iwāḍ, the flotilla of war boats had been playing a significant role in the political history of this country. 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain Shāh and his successors used their fleet in different battles,<sup>1</sup> possibly not without success. The Dhamrai inscription<sup>2</sup> of Fatḥ Shāh dated 1482 A.D. mentions the official title *mīr-i-baḥr* or admiral. It seems highly probable that this office was continued by the Husain Shāhis also. The naval department was placed in charge of this officer. According to Abū'l Faḍl, the duty of the admiral was as follows : (a) to build boats of all kinds for river transport ; (b) to fit out strong boats for transporting war elephants ; (c) to recruit efficient seamen ; (d) to supervise the rivers and (e) to collect duties at the ferryghāṭs. Similar ideas about the function of the admiralty can be gleaned from the *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibī*.<sup>3</sup> Towards the end of the Husain Shāhi rule, the naval power of Bengal seems to have become extremely weak.

Elephants played an important part in the Bengal army. The power of Ḥājī Ilyās was due largely to his strong and big elephants. Nuṣrat Shāh used elephants in his war with the Ahoms who are said to have captured some of them.<sup>4</sup> Sher Khān who defeated Qutb Khān, the general of Maḥmūd Shah III, captured a good number of elephants.<sup>5</sup> In the Sultānate of Delhi, an officer called *shahnāh-i-pīl*, was in charge of elephants. We do not know if the Husain Shāhis

1. *Ibid.* pp. 67 and 70-71 ; Shihāb-ud-dīn Talīsh : *op. cit.* J.A.S.B. 1872, p. 79. Bodleian ms. or. 589, fol. 35b ; *History of Bengal*, vol. II, pp. 147, 153 and 158.
2. J.A.S.B. 1872, pp. 109-110 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 118.
3. *Op. cit.* vol. I, pp. 4-8, 29, 34, 47, 48, 60-62, 121, 165 etc. and vol. II, p. 511.
4. *Ahom Burañji*, ed. G. C. Barua, pp. 68, 71-72 and 73.
5. Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 94.

had a similar office. But it is certain that the body of elephants maintained by them required the services of several men including the stable-keepers.

#### IV

It is very difficult to form an estimate of the revenue administration of the *Ḥusain Shāhī*, for materials relating to it are extremely meagre. We may take into account what *Abū'l Faḍl* has said about the revenue system of medieval Bengal. He remarks, "The people are submissive and pay their rents duly. The demands of each year are paid by instalments in eight months, they themselves bringing mohars and rupees to the appointed place for the receipt of revenue as the division of grain between the government and the husbandman is not here customary. The harvests are always abundant, measurement is not insisted upon, and the revenue demands are determined by estimate of the crop. His Majesty in goodness has confirmed this custom".<sup>1</sup> If carefully analyzed, this statement shows the following features : (a) the annual demands of the government were paid in eight monthly instalments ; (b) the cash payments were made by the peasants direct to the government ; (c) the method of crop-estimation was generally followed ; (d) survey and measurement were not insisted upon and (e) what *Abū'l Faḍl* has said relates even to pre-Mughal Bengal and this old method was allowed by Akbar to continue.

This account is of immense importance, throwing, as it does, much light on the revenue system which was in vogue towards the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The customs mentioned might have prevailed in Bengal in the period of confusion and also in the *Ḥusain Shāhī* period, for the *Sūrs* and the *Karrānīs* had hardly any time to bring about a complete alteration in the revenue administration of the country. In spite of these circumstances, the statement of *Abū'l Faḍl*

1. *Ā'in*, vol. II, p. 134.

cannot be accepted in an unqualified manner. So far as the period under review is concerned, uniformity in the revenue administration all over the country was probably rare. Although the statement may be true of the areas under the direct control of the provincial governors, the system might not have applied to the lands which were under the native *majmu'adārs* and the Portuguese farmers whose existence in some parts of Bengal, serves as a strong argument against the possibility of direct payment categorically mentioned by Abū'l Faḍl. Again the presence of the term *taqsim* in a Bengali work,<sup>1</sup> which relates, according to Moreland,<sup>2</sup> to the apportionment of produce, points to the prevalence of the system of division of crop at least in some parts of the country. While speaking about an earlier period, Ibn Baṭṭūṭah informs us that the cultivators of the villages on either side of 'blue river' used to give to the government half of the crops they produced.<sup>3</sup> Equally untenable is, perhaps, the view that payment in cash was a regular system in those days when use of coins must have been quite limited. Although measurement might not have been "insisted upon", we do not have adequate reason to believe that it was totally absent in the country. Kavikaṅkan's incidental reference to the antiquated measuring units like *kāṭhā* and *kuḍā*, indicates that the system of measurement was in vogue in Bengal. The poet's statement that the *shiqdār* was measuring fifteen *kāṭhās* to a *kuḍā* without listening to the painful entreaties of the subjects,<sup>4</sup> hints at the fact that the Mughal officers working in Bengal in the period of transition, were bringing about changes in the existing system of measuring, causing hardship to the people. Thus it may be reasonably suggested that while the system of measurement was followed in some parts of the country, that of crop-estimation prevailed in some other parts.

1. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* p. 4.

2. *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, pp. 243-47, Appendix E.

3. *Reḥlā*, Eng. tran. by Mahdi Husain, p. 241.

4. *Kavikaṅkan-chaṇḍī*, vol. I, p. 22.

The sultāns derived their revenue from the lands under the control of the provincial governors and also from the local estate-holders and the Portuguese farmers. Lands granted as religious endowments were generally free from the payment of revenue.

There was a section of people known as *majmu'adārs*. The *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* has referred to the estates possessed by Hiranya Dās and Govardhana Dās who collected twenty lakhs as rent and paid twelve lakhs to the government.<sup>1</sup> This shows the nature of *majmu'adārī* in south-west Bengal. The *majmu'adārs* were thus the contracting parties who used to pay a fixed amount to the royal treasury out of what was collected from the peasants. Within their estates, these farmers possibly conducted the revenue administration as they pleased, sometimes making extortionate demands on the peasants. The government which was satisfied with a fixed sum of money, could hardly be expected to look into the internal affairs of these estates. But the *majmu'adārs* had no right of hereditary succession to these estates, which could change hands from time to time.<sup>2</sup> This seems to have served as a positive check on the individual whims of the *majmu'adārs* subjected also to the authority of provincial governors who could keep a vigilant eye on their activities. To illustrate this, we may cite the case of Rām Chandra Kḥān who was mercilessly tortured by the Muslim *wazīr* for his arrear rent.<sup>3</sup>

The Portuguese also acquired rent-receiving interest in this country. They were allowed by Maḥmūd Shāh III to control the customs of Sātgaon and Chittagong, build factories there and collect revenues from the adjoining areas.<sup>4</sup> It seems that these Portuguese settlements were similar to the *majmu'adārī*

1. *Op. cit* p. 293.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 293-94.

3. *Ibid.* p. 278.

4. Campos : *op. cit.* pp. 39 and 46.



already discussed. Their relation with the sultān was based on contract, according to which, they paid an annual tribute to the sultān and managed the revenue affairs within their settlements. 'Abd-ul-Ḥamīd Lāhorī informs us that the Portuguese received Sātḡāon "at a low rent".<sup>1</sup> This means that much margin was left in favour of the Portuguese *ijāradārs* and that the tribute which they were to pay to the sultān was purely of a nominal nature. It appears from what Castanheda<sup>2</sup> has said that the chief of the custom-house of Chittagong collected much revenue from the Hindu and Muslim inhabitants. Nothing is known about the nature of the agrarian system followed by the Portuguese in these areas. The conjecture made by Moreland in this connection is as follows : "In view of the conditions which prevailed", he says, "it is reasonable to infer that these farms were in the nature of clearing leases, that is to say, a fixed annual payment was accepted for vacant land, which the farmer had to bring under cultivation in order to obtain a profit".<sup>3</sup> It must be mentioned here that nothing has been found as yet to substantiate this statement. It is natural that the Portuguese were giving reasonable advantages to the Christians who were settling in these areas.

We do not know if *jāgirdārī* was a regular system in Bengal in the period in question. Niẓām-ud-dīn tells us, "Naṣīb Shāh bestowed on all of them *jagirs*, as far as possible and depending on the exigencies of the time".<sup>4</sup> Similar ideas have also been expressed by Salīm<sup>5</sup> and Firishṭah<sup>6</sup> who do not, of course, mention the term '*jāgīr*'. These authors have referred to the Afghān political refugees who came to Bengal after

1. *Pādishāhnāmah*, I, pp. 434 and 437 ; Elliot and Dowson : *op. cit.* vol. VIII, p. 32.
2. Quoted by Campos : *op. cit.* p. 46.
3. Moreland : *op. cit.* p. 190.
4. Niẓām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* III, p. 271 ; Eng. tran. III, 444.
5. *Op. cit.* p. 137.
6. *Op. cit.* II, p. 302.

having escaped the attack of Bābur. Since they are not mentioned by our writers as having accepted service under Nuṣrat Shāh, we do not find any reason to support the view that they enjoyed *jāgīrs* in Bengal. The *jāgīr*, in the strict sense of the term, could follow only as a necessary corollary of services which might be rendered to the royalty. Niẓām-ud-dīn who was thoroughly acquainted with the *jāgīr* system in North India seems to have confused the Afghān settlements of Bengal with *jāgīrdārī*. These settlements might be of the nature of *ijāradārī* already noticed by us. Should we then suggest that *jāgīrdārī* was totally absent in Bengal? An affirmative answer to this question cannot be given due to certain reasons. It was widely in vogue in the different parts of India. Niẓām-ud-dīn actually makes a difference between *zamīndārī* and *jāgīrdārī* when he says that Sikandar Lūdī granted some parganahs in *jāgīr* to his own men, taking them from the possession of *zamīndārs* in Bihār.<sup>1</sup> The author has quite categorically mentioned that the system worked under Ibrāhīm Lūdī also.<sup>2</sup> Mahuan who came to Bengal in the early part of the fifteenth century, found the soldiers and military officers receiving cash payments and also noticed the wide circulation of '*tanka*' and *cowries*.<sup>3</sup> The system of cash payments does not preclude the possibility of the prevalence of *jāgīr* system, for both might go on side by side in this country. As there was restricted circulation of coins in those days, payments could be conveniently made only through systems like *jāgīrdārī*.

The *zamīndārī* system in the modern sense of the term was probably absent. Abū'l Faḍl says that in the *sarkār* Faṭḥābād alone, there were three classes of *zamīndārs* and that the revenue received from the independent *talukdārs* of the *sarkār*

1. Niẓām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 320 ; see also pp. 332 and 335.
2. *Ibid.* I, p. 343. For the mention of *jāgīrs* under Sher Shāh and Humāyūn, consult *Ṭabaqāt*, II, pp. 38, 86 and 87.
3. Mahuan's Account : *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 530. See also *Ying Yai Sheng lan*, *Viśva-bhāratī Annals*, 1945, I, p. 117, and *Sī yang ch'ao kung tien lu*, *op. cit.* p. 125.

Sulaimānābād amounted to 213,067 dams.<sup>1</sup> Kavikañkan states that he lived in the *taluk* of Gopināth Niogi.<sup>2</sup> It may be pointed out here that the rent-roll of Todar Mall which is the basis of Abū'l Faḍl's information might have confused *ijāradārī* with *zamīndārī*. Again what Kavikañkan has said may apply only to the period of transition and not necessarily to the period under discussion. Some writers have tried to indicate the antiquity of some of the *zamīndār* families of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> But their views are generally based on local traditions which are not always historically reliable. It seems that the *majmū'adārs* and *ijāradārs* had grown into hereditary landlords during the period of confusion. Moreland has shown how the term *zamīndārī* was used in various senses.<sup>4</sup> If the local farmers are regarded as *zamīndārs*, we have got nothing to say. What appears to us is that the system was not hereditary in a particular family or families in Husain Shāhi Bengal.

Customs constituted another source of income. They were generally realized at the river-stations and also at the different ports and towns of the country. The ports were generally provided with custom-houses each of which was placed under a custom-chief, directly appointed by the sultān.<sup>5</sup> The Portuguese accounts speak of the custom-houses of Chittagong and Sātgaon. The chief custom officer was probably as powerful as the provincial governor. The mint was a regular source of income in those days.

The Husain Shāhis were interested in public works of different kinds which are evidenced by the numerous inscriptions

1. *Ā'in*, II, pp. 144 and 154.

2. *Op. cit.* I, p. 22.

3. J. C. Basu; *Medinipurer Itihāsa*, II, pp. 498-99 and 504-533; see also *Maimansingher Varendra Brāhman Zamidār*, part II, by S. K. Ray Choudhury.

4. *Op. cit.* pp. 191-94.

5. Barbosa; *op. cit.* II, p. 148; Castanheda: quoted by Campos; *op. cit.* p. 46; see also p. 39 of the same work.

of this period. Tanks, for the supply of water, bridges and mosques<sup>1</sup> which they constructed undoubtedly increased the facilities for travel and greatly facilitated the internal trade of the country. Again these public works involved employment of a large number of labourers and thus helped the distribution of wealth in the country. But it is not clearly known whether there was a regular governmental department to control public works.

## V

It is not easy to give a correct list of the provinces into which Bengal was divided. The *Ā'in* has mentioned the following territorial units.<sup>2</sup> The *sarkārs* called Lakṣnautī, Purniyah, Tājpur, Panjrah, Ghorāghāt, Bārbakābād, Bāzuhā, Sylhet, Sonārgāon and Chātḡāon comprised the region north and south of the Ganges. Sātḡāon, Maḥmūdābād, Fathābād and Baklā covered the delta of the Ganges. The *sarkārs* south of the Ganges and west of the Bhāḡirathi were Tāndā, Sharīfābād, Sulaimānābād and Mandāran.

Blochmann has suggested that the above divisions represent the territorial and fiscal units of pre-Mughal Bengal. This inference can hardly stand scrutiny. The rent-roll of Todar Mall which has given these *sarkārs*, was prepared in 1582 when the Mughal state was in a fluid condition. It represents only an ideal picture of Bengal. This explains why Chātḡāon has been included in the rent-roll, although it was not conquered during

1. See inscriptions published in the following works and journals ; *J.A.S.B.* 1861, p. 390 ; 1872, pp. 337-38 ; 1874, pp. 303 and 308 ; 1909, p. 260 ; *I.H.Q.* vol. vii, 1931, p. 18 ; *A.S.R.* vol. xv, p. 144 ; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* pp. 153 and 157-159 ; Ravenshaw : *op. cit.* p. 94, pl. 58, no. 24 ; *E.I.M.* 1933-34, p. 3 ; *J.B.O.R.S.* vol. iv, 1918, pp. 184-86.
2. *Ā'in*, vol. ii, pp. 142-155 ; Blochmann : "Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal", part ii, *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pp. 215-18.

the time of Akbar and Jahāngīr. In fact the territorial extent of Husain Shāhi Bengal was greater than what is mentioned in the *Ā'in*. But information as supplied by the *Ā'in* cannot be summarily rejected, for the inscriptions of the period mention some of these divisions such as Tippera and Sylhet.<sup>1</sup> Again, Husainābād, Fathābād, Nuṣratābād, Mu'azzamābād, Khalīfatābād, Bārbakābād, Muḥammadābād, Mahmūdābād and Muẓaffarābād were the mint towns of this period.<sup>2</sup> It may be inferred here that these were also the provincial headquarters of Husain Shāhi Bengal, each of these towns representing a particular region after which it was named. Husainābād, Nuṣratābād and Mahmūdābād may be regarded as synonyms of Gaud. Bengali literature and Portuguese accounts tell us that Chittagong was under the control of the Husain Shāhis.<sup>3</sup> 'Arṣah Sājīāmankhābād appears repeatedly in the Husain Shāhi inscriptions.<sup>4</sup> Bengal inscriptions found at Sāran and Monghyr show that the Husain Shāhi kingdom included southern and northern parts of Bibār. Similar information is supplied by Niẓām-ud-dīn and Bābur.<sup>5</sup> Mandāran which appears in the *Ā'in* as a *sarkār*, was partly included in the Husain Shāhi kingdom. Thus the *Ā'in* supplemented by numismatic and epigraphic evidences give us the following provinces of the Husain Shāhi kingdom : (i) Chittagong, (ii) Tippera, (iii) *iqlīm* Mu'azzamābād, (iv) Sylhet, (v) Fathābād, (vi) Khalīfatābād, (vii) Lakhnautī or Husainābād, (viii) Bārbakābād, (ix) Sātgaon, (x) 'arsah Sājīāmankhābād, (xi) North

1. For the inscriptions see *J.A.S.B.* 1872, pp. 333-34 ; 1873, pp. 285-86 ; Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 141 ; Dani : *Bibliography*, pp. 59 and 63 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, pp. 190 and 192. *Thanah* Laud mentioned in the inscriptions of the time formed part of Sylhet.
2. Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* pp. 45, 47-48, 50-51, and 52-55 ; Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pp. 172-80 ; Botham : *op. cit.* pp. 166-69 and 172-73.
3. *Parāgalī Mahābhārat* : quoted by D. C. Sen : *op. cit.* p. 94 ; Shrikara Nandī : *op. cit.* p. 3 ; Campos : *op. cit.* pp. 34 and 39.
4. *J.A.S.B.* 1870, p. 284 ; 1909, p. 260 ; *E.I.M.* 1915-16, pp. 12-14 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 175 ff.
5. Bābur : *op. cit.* II, p. 686 ; Niẓām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* *Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, vol. II, 94.

Bihār with its headquarters at Hājipur, (xii) South Bihār with its political centre at Monghyr and (xiii) the newly conquered area of Kāmṛūpa and Kāmṭa. We do not know if Panjrah, Ghorāghaṭ, Tājpur and Purniyah existed as separate provinces. They might have formed the parts of North Bihār, Bārbakābād, and Lakhnauti provinces of the Husain Shāhi. Similarly, Mandāran might have been included in the 'arṣah Sājāmankh-bād and Bakla, in Fatḥābād. Sonārgāon was possibly included in *iqlim* Mu'azzamābād.

Each of these provinces was variously known as *iqlim*, *mulk* or 'arṣah.<sup>1</sup> Thus there was hardly any uniformity in the administrative terminology of the country. The terms, *iqlim*, 'arṣah and *diyār* were applied to the different parts of Bengal as early as the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> 'Arṣah Sātgaon has been mentioned on the coins of Muḥammad-bin-Tughluq.<sup>3</sup> These terms are found on a number of coins belonging to the Ilyās Shāhi period.<sup>4</sup> The expression, *mulk Chāwalistān* urf 'arṣah Kāmṛū appearing on a coin of Sikandar Shāh, dated 759 A.H.<sup>5</sup> clearly shows that the term *mulk* was identical with 'arṣah. It is evident that the coins containing these terms were representing the provinces from which they were issued. All of them remained in circulation and neither Husain Shāhi nor Ilyās Shāhi rulers seem to have aimed at any uniformity so far as the use of these terms was concerned.

1. They are mentioned in the inscriptions of the Husain Shāhi period. See *J.A.S.B.* 1670, pp. 284, 290 and 294; 1872, pp. 333-34 and 1873, pp. 266 and 293-94; *E. I. M.*, 1915-16, pp. 12-14; Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 141; Dani : *Bibliography*, pp. 53 and 63; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 175 ff. and p. 192. The term *mulk* appears in the *Manasā-maṅgal* of Vijaya Gupta, p. 4.
2. Barani ; *op. cit.* p. 93, see my review in *J.A.S.P.* 1958, p. 209 and A. Karim : *Ibid.* p. 72.
3. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, p. 40.
4. Lane-Poole ; *op. cit.* p. 35 ; Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pp. 152, 153, 155, 156 and 159.
5. *Ibid.* II, 152.

Thus we find that the term *sarkār* which was used by Sher Shāh and the Mughal emperors was totally absent in Husain Shāhi Bengal. Blochmann contends that the term '*arṣah*' means more than a *parganah* and that it is equivalent to the Mughal term *sarkār*.<sup>1</sup> This inference is vitiated, for, technically '*arṣah* or *iqḷīm* of the Husain Shāhis is of wider significance than the *sarkār* of the Mughals. The territorial extent of an '*arṣah*' might have corresponded to that of a *sarkār*. But the *sarkār* was a part of the Mughal province, and the '*arṣah*' was the province of the Husain Shāhi kingdom. Each of these provinces was divided into a number of *mahals*,<sup>2</sup> the village being the lowest revenue unit.

The province was placed under an officer who had the title *sar-i-laṣḥkar wa wazīr*.<sup>3</sup> This title may be explained here. It has two parts, i.e. *sar-i-laṣḥkar* or commander-in-chief and *wazīr* which ordinarily means minister. But the term *wazīr* does not seem to have been used in its generally accepted sense in Husain Shāhi Bengal. It may be suggested here that it means a revenue officer. In fact this term has on several occasions been used in the sense of a financial officer in Indian history. Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Tughluq conferred the office

1. J.A.S.B. 1870, p. 295.

2. *Ibid.* 1870, p. 294, and 1873, pp. 272-73; *A'in*, vol. II, pp. 142-55. The Bara inscription of Bārbak Shāh dated 866/1459 shows that *sar gamāshṭah* or chief accountant was placed over a *qaṣbah*; *E.I.* 1953-54, p. 21, pl. VIII (a); Dani: *Bibliography*, p. 22; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, p. 71. The term *sar gamāshṭah* indicates that there were other subordinate accountants under him, working in the same *qaṣbah* which was probably the part of the *maḥal*.

3. J. A. S. B. 1870, pp. 284, 290 and 294; 1873, pp. 272, 273, 286, 293-94 and 296; 1909, p. 260; *E.I.M.* 1915-16, pp. 12-14; Cunningham: *op. cit.* p. 141. The title mentioned above finds repeated mention in the inscriptions published in these journals; cf: Dani: *Bibliography*, pp. 53, 57, 59. etc; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, pp. 160, 169. etc.

of *wazir* of Dīogīr on Malik Burhān-ud-dīn.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Raḍī-ul-Mulk was appointed *wazir* of Ma'bar ; Malik Ashrāf, *wazir* of Tilang<sup>2</sup> and Malik Abū Rijā, *wazir* of Lakhnauti,<sup>3</sup> for revenue administration. Under Akbar, the provincial *dīwāns* were originally called *wazir*. The Bengali sources of our period associate this officer with the revenue administration of the country.<sup>4</sup> Thus it seems fairly certain that the provincial governors of the Husain Shāhis were the military and financial heads of their respective provinces. As the highest military officer of the province, his duty was obviously to maintain the soldiers who were placed under him, with a view to utilizing their services in times of war. As the financial officer, he had to look after the revenue administration of the country with the help of a number of subordinate officials.

This will not warrant the conclusion that there was a uniform system of provincial administration all over the country. This explains why we find the governor in various positions. This officer could be placed in charge of a town in a particular locality where he could enjoy a comfortable plurality of offices. The Devikot inscription of Husain Shāh shows that Khān Rukn Khān 'Alā'-ud-dīn Sarhatī who was the *sar-i-lashkar wa wazir* of the city of Muẓaffarābād, was also the *kotwāl-i-bak-ā'li* or the chief police officer and *munsif-i-dīwān-i-kotwālī*

1. Nizām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 192.

2. Baranī : *op. cit.* pp. 454-55.

3. Yahyā bin Aḥmad : *op. cit.* p. 98. Originally, however, the term *wazir* does not seem to have been used in the sense of a minister. It might have been derived from *al-wzir* meaning a burden, from *al-wazar* meaning a shelter and also from *azr* meaning the back. This is in view of the fact that the minister bears the burden of the state, that the ruler gets shelter under the minister's help and advice and that his backing adds strength to the position of the king. See Mawardī : *Āḥkām - us - Sultaniyah*, Cairo. ed. p. 22. In Bengal administration, the term *wazir* was applied to the provincial governor probably in the sense of helper to the king.

4. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : *op. cit.* pp. 278 and 293.



or judge of the criminal court of another town called Firūzābād.<sup>1</sup> In this case, the function of a governor in charge of a single city was not as complicated as that of a provincial governor so that it was possible for him to serve in various capacities in other towns. Again the governor could exercise his power over a province together with a number of cities and *mahals*.<sup>2</sup> This may be interpreted in two ways. (a) These cities and *mahals* might have been within the province over which the officer was placed and their civil and military administration was under the direct control of the governor. (b) Again if they were outside his province, the extension of his governorship over them would mean additional posts and duties for him. Only in a single inscription,<sup>3</sup> the same man is found to be the *sar-i-lashīkar* of one province and *wazīr* of another territory. This suggests that a man who was the highest military officer of a province could also act as the highest revenue officer in the adjacent province. Very often *thānahs* or military outposts in the frontier region were placed under the control of the governor of the province adjacent to them.<sup>4</sup>

One can easily realize the influence and power enjoyed by these military governors. Certain measures were probably adopted to minimize their power. The sultān who appointed the governors could also dismiss them and dismissal meant temporary chaos. Bābur remarks, "If the royal heart demand that a person

1. *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 106; Cunningham: *op. cit.* pp. 99-100; *E.I.M.* 1929-30 pp. 12-13, pl. viii (b); Dani: *Bibliography*, p. 57; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, p. 190-91.
2. *J. A. S. B.* 1870, pp. 283-84; 1909, p. 260; *E. I. M.* 1915-16, pp. 12-14. See the Tribenī inscriptions; Dani: *Bibliography*, p. 53; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, p. 175 ff.
3. *J.A.S.B.* 1872, pp. 333-34. See the Sonargāon inscription dated 919/1513; Dani: *Bibliography*, p. 59; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, p. 192.
4. *J.A.S.B.* 1870, pp. 283-84; 1909, p. 260; *E.I.M.* 1915-16, pp. 12-14. See the Tribenī inscription of Husain Shāh.

should be dismissed and another be appointed to sit in his place, the whole body of subordinates attached to that office become the (new) office holders".<sup>1</sup> This statement means that whenever a superior officer was dismissed, the subordinate officers connected with that office were also theoretically dismissed ; but they were newly appointed to their respective posts. Thus the subordinate officers were also haunted by a sense of insecurity which prevented them from being blind supporters of a disloyal or rebellious governor or officer. Governorship does not seem to have been hereditary in a particular family. Again, the governor was transferred from one province to another.<sup>2</sup> These measures checked the centrifugal forces which might operate from time to time. If Bābur is to be relied upon, the income of every province was utilized to meet the administrative expenses of that province. "To defray these charges no impost is laid on other lands".<sup>3</sup>

The *mahals* were generally placed under an officer bearing the titles *shiqdār* and *jangdār*<sup>4</sup> who was connected, as the first title suggests, with the revenue administration of the *maḥal* or *mahals* under him. The second title indicates the military nature of the office. Thus the officer under discussion had to control the soldiers who might be placed in his *mahals*. He was thus subordinate to the military governor of the province—a fact evidenced by the Dinajpur inscription of Bārbak Shāh

1. *Op. cit.* II, p. 482.

2. The Devikot inscription of Husain Shāh mentioned above, shows that Rukn Khān was the governor of Muzaffarāzād. According to the Sylhet inscription, quoted in ch. II, the same person was the governor of Kāmru-Kāmta and Orissa-Jājnagar. Thus his transfer is indicated.

3. *Op. cit.* II, p. 483.

4. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pp. 272-73 ; *E.I.M.* 1937-38, p. 38, pl. XII (a) ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 23 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 73. The reference is to the Dinajpur inscription of Bārbak. It may be assumed that the administrative arrangement of the time of Bārbak, continued also in the period under review. *Jangdār* is mentioned in the Navagram inscription of Nuṣrat dated 1526 A.D.

in which the *shiqdār* and *jangdār* "of the affairs of Jor and Baror" seems to have carried out the order of the local governor by constructing a mosque. The *muqaddam*<sup>1</sup> helped him in collecting revenue from the villages. The *shiqdār* must have transmitted surplus revenues to the provincial governor after having met administrative expenses in his own locality.

Hardly anything is known about other officials who were connected with the administrative machinery of the province. It seems highly probable that the provincial administration was a copy of the central structure. We have already seen that there was the police department under an officer called *kotwāl-i-bak a'lā*. The criminal court which was presided over by a *munṣif* was perhaps connected with this department.

The judiciary was undoubtedly an important department. In the *Manasā-maṅgal* of Vijaya Gupta, the *qāḍī* is associated with another official called *hawladār*<sup>2</sup> who seems to be a police officer. Apart from conducting judicial administration, the *qāḍī* was connected with various civil affairs. Placed in charge of towns and important villages,<sup>3</sup> the *qāḍīs* had to, very often, supervise religious endowments, and prevent the *mullās* and landlords from defrauding "legacies", which has been mentioned as one of "the earnest duties" of the *qāḍī* and the *hakim* in the Sātgaon inscription of Nuṣrat Shāh. The *qāḍī* of the political headquarters of the province seems to have been subordinate to the provincial governor. In the *Chaitanya-bhāgabat*, the *qāḍī* is found deciding cases finally in accordance with the instructions of the *Mulukpati*<sup>4</sup> or provincial governor. Corporal punishment was sometimes inflicted on the guilty.

1. Vipradās : *Manasā-vijaya* : p. 143.

2. *Op. cit.* p. 54.

3. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 54-56 ; Bṛndāvanadās *op. cit.* pp. 98, 100, 101, 266, 267, 275-76, 277 and 379 ; Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : *op. cit.* pp. 64-67.

4. *Op. cit.* p. 100.

Besides these functionaries, there were possibly other departments, viz. those of finance, correspondence, and military affairs about which nothing is known. Coins were issued from the provincial mint towns which must have been placed under mint officials.

## VI

It may be pointed out here that some of the administrative terms and honorary titles such as *'arsah*, *muqṭa'*, *jāmdār*, *sharābdār*, *kotwāl*, *qāḍī*, *wazīr*, *khān-i-a'zam*, *khāqān-i-mu'azzam* and *majlis*<sup>1</sup> appearing in the inscriptions of Bengal are also found in those of pre-Mughal Gujrāt.<sup>2</sup> A few more official terms such as *'ariq* (paymaster of the forces) and *khwājāh-sarā* (the chief eunuch), which we come across in Gujrāt inscriptions<sup>3</sup> are available in Persian chronicles dealing with the history of pre-Mughal Bengal.<sup>4</sup> One of the inscriptions of Aḥmad Shāh of Gujrāt, dated 855 A.H./1452 A.D.<sup>5</sup> mentions the granting of six ploughs of rent-free land to an official named Malik Shā'bān. Mukundarām's description of the kingdom of Kālaketu suggests that the cultivator in medieval Bengal had very often to pay rents in accordance with the number of ploughs used for tilling the plot of land he possessed.<sup>6</sup> Thus it seems probable that there was a process of mutual contact between Bengal and Gujrāt in the spheres of administration and culture. The striking resemblance which the architectural and calligraphic styles of Husain Shāhi Bengal bear to those of Gujrāt and political

1. *Supra*. pp. 97-98.

2. M. A. Chagatai : "Muslim Monuments of Aḥmadābād Through Their Inscriptions," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Institute*, 1941-42, vol. III, pp. 107-9, 111-12, 133, 139, 141-43 etc. ; pls. IV (a), IV (b), V, XVII, XXIII, XXIV ; *J.A.S.P.* 1958, p. 210.

3. Chagatai : *op. cit.* pp. 128-30, 136 and 138 ; pls. XIV, XX (a) and XXI.

4. *Tārīkh-i-Mubārak-shāhi*, p. 105 and *Riyāḍ*, p. 120.

5. Chagatai : *op. cit.* p. 129.

6. *Infra*. Ch. IV, sec. II.

and commercial relationship that appears to have existed between these countries, tend to add strength to the above contention.

Administrative features of Bengal seem to have migrated to Arakan, for we are told by Daulat Qāḍī<sup>1</sup> that Ashraf Khān, an officer of the early seventeenth century Arakan, had the title of *wazīr-lashkar*. The history of the contact of some of the Arakanese rulers with the sultāns of Bengal is quite well-known. Naramaikha who was exiled to Gaud in the early part of the fifteenth century, is said to have regained his kingdom with the help of the sultān of Bengal. His successors started using Muslim designations and titles and issuing coins bearing the *kalimah*.<sup>2</sup> These circumstances seem to explain the reasons of the influence of Bengal on the administrative system of the then Arakan.

## VII

In spite of a considerable amount of central control over the provincial affairs, centrifugal forces could work whenever the central authority or the ruler was weak. The authority of the governor who behaved almost like a petty king in all local affairs tended very often to be supreme. We do not hear of any governor revolting in the reigns of Husain Shāh and his immediate successor Nuṣrat Shāh. Towards the end of the period under review, when governmental machinery was going out of gear, the governors of the outlying regions were behaving almost independently. Khudā Bakḥsh Khān, governor of Chittagong and Makhdūm Ālam, governor of North Bihār are instances in point.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the vigilance of the rulers, the local officers very often used to oppress the people. This is what is revealed through the *Hasan-Husain* episode found in the *Manasā-maṅgal*

1. *Sati Mainā O Lora Chandrānī*, p. 46; J.A.S.P. 1958, p. 211.

2. Phare: *op. cit.* pp. 78-80 and Harvey: *op. cit.* pp. 139-40.

3. *Supra*. p. 82 ff.

of Vijaya Gupta.<sup>1</sup> The *Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta* has shown how the Muslim *wazīr* destroyed a village in south-west Bengal which formed a part of the estate of Rām Chandra Khān.<sup>2</sup> Again, Husain Shāh used to complain about the oppressive conduct of Rūpa.<sup>3</sup> Thus it seems that there was hardly any effective check on the local officers who were apt to turn tyrannical. This was probably due to the decentralizing tendencies which characterized the Husain Shāhī rule. Although the administration was not immune from these drawbacks, it may be said in fairness to it that such cases of oppression were rare exceptions at least under the first two rulers.

The defects appear to have been out-weighed by the benefits which Husain Shāhī rule conferred on the people. All sections of people enjoyed various advantages under a government which was free from religious fanaticism. The rulers might have been actuated by political considerations in following a thoroughly liberal policy ; nevertheless, it was quite helpful in promoting the country's interest. The gradual *rapprochement* between the ruler and the ruled which characterized this age, ushered in a new era of socio-political existence. The Husain Shāhīs identified themselves with the interests of the people so completely that they were regarded as the children of the soil. They represented the aspirations of the people by patronizing their literature and giving a local colour to the different aspects of life. Under the benign influence of such a government, trade and industry flourished on an unprecedented scale, art and architecture received attention and national prosperity seems to have considerably increased. Viewed from this angle of vision, Husain Shāhī rule is a land-mark in the history of this country.

1. *Op. cit.* pp. 54-57.

2. *Op. cit.* p. 278.

3. *Ibid.* p. 197.

#### CHAPTER IV

### *ECONOMIC CONDITIONS*

IT is worth while to form an idea about the economic life of Bengal in the period under review. Varthema and Barbosa who visited Bengal in the early part of the sixteenth century and Joao de Barros who wrote immediately after the fall of the Husain Shahi dynasty, have left us quite valuable accounts about the economic condition of the country. These accounts taken together with Bengali poems, Persian literature, coins and inscriptions give a good deal of indications as to the developments in the field of economy that characterized the life of the country. Bengal could derive her wealth mainly from three sources, viz., agriculture, trade and industry. Before giving an account of the different economic classes, it is necessary for us to discuss each of these sources at considerable length.

In the absence of any statistical data, it is impossible to have a precise idea about the ratio of the urban and rural population. As the society of medieval Bengal was basically agricultural, people living in villages must have outnumbered those of towns and cities. The rural settlements of the period under review do not seem to have had a uniform pattern or character. If some of them possessed organized units of

human groups, others contained, in all probability, some scattered population. The *Maṅgal* poems of the period represent the Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśhyas, Śūdras, Muslim weavers and others' living in compact groups in the particular area of the village allotted to each of them. But the distribution of population in some parts of East Bengal and North Bengal appears to have assumed a somewhat different character. Even to-day, the rural areas of the districts like Faridpur, Dacca and Mymensingh, contain isolated habitations interspersed by jungles, meadows and plots of cultivable land. If such is the picture of the village settlements in modern times which are characterized by over-population, we can hardly presume that the limited number of medieval people inhabiting the rural areas, should have lived in closely-knit groups. The scattered nature of the habitations may be explained by such factors as the availability of land, the individualistic nature of the people and the nomadic habits of the tribal folks such as Kochas, Mechhas and Thārus noticed in East and North Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

Rural settlements contained, in addition to habitations, roads and paths, tanks with bathing *ghāṭs* which supplied water to the people, jungles serving the purpose of the pasture-land and canals<sup>3</sup> forming a sort of drainage system for the village. There were arable land and fallow land,<sup>4</sup> the latter being brought under cultivation<sup>5</sup> with the gradual increase of population. Some of the villages had local markets or *hāṭs*<sup>6</sup> where people used to go to buy and sell the necessities of life. It is known

1. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 4 and 59-61.
2. Minhāj : *op. cit.* pp. 152 and 156.
3. Roads, tanks, meadows and canals or ditches are frequently mentioned in medieval Bengali literature ; Vipradās : *op. cit.* pp. 58, 60, 64 and 66 ; Shaiḵh Faiḍullah : *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, p. 34 ; Chūḍa-maṇidās : *Gaurāṅga-vijaya*, p. 79.
4. Kavi-kaṅkan Mukandarama : *op. cit.* 1, p. 22.
5. *Viśva-bhārati Annals*, 1945, 1, p. 99.
6. Shaiḵh Faiḍullah : *op. cit.* p. 40.



from Shrinātha Āchāryachūḍāmaṇi's *Vivāha-tattvārṇava* that rural areas had fertile land (*urvarā bhūmi*) pasture-land (*gochāraṇabhūmi*), place for religious sacrifice (*vedibhūmi*), bāzār (*vikrayasthāna*), lake (*hrada*) barren land (*nīṣarabhūmi*), cross-way (*chatuspatha*) and crematorium (*śmashāna*).<sup>1</sup> Thus the disposition of land in rural settlements conformed, in many respects, to the needs of the people.

Considered from the point of view of its economic structure, the village in medieval Bengal did not differ much from its modern counterpart. It had a number of inter-dependent, socio-economic groups which lived and functioned for sustaining the life of the entire rural population. The cultivator needed the service of the carpenter and the blacksmith who used to supply ploughs and iron implements for cultivation. All sections of people were dependent on the potter who was the traditional maker of earthen utensils prepared and designed to fulfil the kitchen requirements. Similarly, other groups of people had direct connection with the economic frame-work of the village.<sup>2</sup> The permanent dependence of the socio-economic classes on particular means of livelihood and the unchanging pattern of the society created a sort of continuity in the rural life which was responsible for the growth of certain manners, customs and institutions having a static character. If anybody tries to compare the rites, ceremonies and festivals obtaining in the Hindu society of medieval or ancient, rural Bengal, with their modern counterparts, he will be perhaps struck with wonder at the essential continuity they are likely to reveal. The rural settlement was, more or less, a self-contained unit of habitation. The peasant could, without much difficulty, exchange his surplus product in the local market for salt, oil, cloth and other necessities of life. Though mainly based on land and its produce, the village had thus a limited amount of trade and commerce.

1. S. C. Bandyopadhyay: *Smṛti Shāstre Vāṅgālī*, p. 55.

2. Cf. K. M. Ashraf: *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, p. 196 ff. for the characteristics of a modern village.

In contrast to the rural areas, towns and cities were perhaps characterized by the concentration of people who had gathered with the object of associating themselves with administration, trade and commerce. In addition to Gauḍ, Pāṇḍua, Sātgaon, Chittagong and Sonārgaon whose existence can be explained in terms of political and commercial reasons, there was a large number of towns<sup>1</sup> which sprang into existence as a result of the installation of the governmental mint machinery in the different parts of the country. Although the founder of the Husain Shāhī dynasty shifted the capital to Ekdālā, the importance of Gauḍ and Pāṇḍua which were capitals in the earlier periods of Muslim rule, does not appear to have decreased. Apart from serving as political centres, these two cities communicated with the different parts of the country along the courses of the Ganges, the Bhāgirathī, the Mahānandā and the Kālindī. They kept in touch with such strategic points as the passes of Teliagarhi and Sikrigah at the Rājmahal hills and contributed considerably to the commercial life of Bengal.

A careful examination of the site of Gauḍ which is at present in ruins, shows that the commercial town was located in the northern part and that the citadel stood on the southern part of the city.<sup>2</sup> The prosperity and population of Gauḍ did not escape the notice of foreign travellers and cartographers. Writing before 1540 A.D., Joao de Barros observes,<sup>3</sup> "The streets are broad and straight and the main streets have trees planted in rows along the walls to give shade to the passengers. The population is so great and the streets so thronged with the concourse and traffic of people that they cannot force their way past one another. A great part of the city consists of stately and well-wrought buildings". The account of Faria y Souza written before 1640, refers to "the principal city of Gouro

1. For the names of these towns, see Ch. III, p. 114

2. Abid Ali: *op. cit.* pp. 42, 50 and 55; see also pl. II, showing the site plan of Gauḍ.

3. Quoted, *ibid.* p. 43.

seated on the bank of Ganges, three leagues in length, containing one million and two hundred thousand families, "and well fortified".<sup>1</sup> Manrique who paid a visit to Gauḍ in 1641, speaks of the discovery of "...3 copper vessels, filled with gold coins and precious stones valued at three crores of rupees.....".<sup>2</sup> While the contemporary accounts tell us that the city was three leagues<sup>3</sup> or about nine miles long, Rennell who visited Gauḍ in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, remarks, "Taking the extent of Gauḍ at the most reasonable calculation it is not less than fifteen miles in length (extending along the old bank of the Ganges) and from 2 to 3 miles in breadth".<sup>4</sup> The transfer of the seat of Husain Shāhi administration to Ekdālā was perhaps due to the periodical inundation of Gauḍ caused by the marshes Chhutia Putia which lay on the eastern side of the city<sup>5</sup> and to the changing nature of the course of the Ganges<sup>6</sup> which was affecting the communication system and commerce of the metropolitan area.

Several factors account for the importance of Pāṇḍuā. First, it was the capital city in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Secondly, it lay near the junction of the Mahānandā and a former bed of the Ganges. Thirdly, it was situated on the river-routes and land-routes<sup>7</sup> leading to the different areas

1. *Op. cit.* I, pp. 416-17.

2. Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 43.

3. The Portuguese agent sent by Affonso de Mello in 1534 to attend the court of Ghiyath-ud-dīn Maḥmūd, noticed that the city was "well fortified and three leagues in length" Stapleton's note, *ibid.* p. 42 ; cf. also Faria y Souza cited above.

4. *Memoir of a Map of Hindustan*, p. 51. The different parts of the present site of Gauḍ were perhaps inhabited at different periods. Hence the difference between the earlier and later writers with regard to the size of the city.

5. Ā'in, II, p. 135 ; *Risālat-ush-shuhadā*, J.A.S.B. 1874, p. 226.

6. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 144, f.n. 1.

7. Abid Ali : *op. cit.* pl. v showing the site plan of Pāṇḍuā ; Rennell : *Memoir of a Map...* p. 56.

of North Bengal and Bihār. Finally, it contained the grave of Nūr Quṭb-i-‘Ālam which elevated it to the position of a place of pilgrimage.<sup>1</sup> Chinese accounts have referred to the richness and luxury which characterized the life of Pāṇḍuā. One of them gives the following information : “The city walls are very imposing, the bazars well arranged, the shops side by side, the pillars in orderly rows ; they are full of every kind of goods. The dwelling of the king is all of bricks set in mortar, the flight of steps leading upto it is high and broad. The halls are flat-roofed and white-washed inside. The inner doors are of triple thickness and of nine panels. In the audience hall the pillars are plated with brass, ornamented with figures of flowers and animals, carved and polished. To the right and left are long verandahs.....”<sup>2</sup> It is stated in another account<sup>3</sup> that the city and the suburbs were “large and elegant”. Chinese writings have, no doubt, preserved a record of the life and conditions obtaining in the metropolitan city of Pāṇḍuā particularly under the rule of the house of Rājā Gaṇeśha. But there is hardly any reason to believe that the prosperity of the city completely vanished immediately after or within a few decades of the transfer of the capital to Gauḍ by the later Ilyās Shāhī rulers.<sup>4</sup> The present site of Pāṇḍuā, nearly twenty miles to the north-east of Gauḍ, contains a square mound, five miles

1. Salīm says that Ḥusain Shāh used to come from Ekdālā every year on foot to visit the tomb of Nūr Quṭb-i-‘Ālam at Pāṇḍuā ; *Riyāḍ*, p. 135.
2. *Sing ch’a sheng lan* : compiled by Feisin in 1436 ; tran. by P. C. Bagchi in *Vikṣya-bhārati Annals*, *op. cit.* p. 121. For similar descriptions of Pāṇḍuā, see also *Si yang ch’ao kung tien lu*, compiled by Huang Sing Ts’eng in 1520 ; *op. cit.* pp. 124 and 126-27 ; and *Shu yu chou tseu lu*, compiled by Yen Ts’ong Kien in 1574 ; *op. cit.* p. 130 ff.
3. *Si yang ch’ao kung tien lu*, *op. cit.* p. 123.
4. M. M. Chakravarti ; “Notes on the Geography of Old Bengal” *J.A.S.B.* 1908, p. 285.

in diameter,<sup>1</sup> whose continuous line of fortification is archaeologically considered to have enclosed the city in the Muslim period.

From a close examination of the topography and archaeology of the site of Ekdālā<sup>2</sup> in Dinajpur district stretching from the Bāliya river on the east to the Chirāmātī river on the west, it appears that the seat of Ḥusain Shāhi administration like other medieval cities, was protected by a continuous moat having links with the rivers. Its geographical situation clearly indicates that it had approaches to Devikot and Pāṇḍua along land-routes.<sup>3</sup> Hardly anything is known about the economic condition of Ekdālā which was inhabited at the time of Firūz Tughluq's attack in the late fourteenth century, by such groups as upper class people, students, ṣūfis, ascetics, strangers and foreigners.<sup>4</sup> Primarily a political centre, Ekdālā might also have some commercial function sustained by supplies from the adjacent agricultural area.

Several towns were brought into being by strategic and military considerations. Mandāran at the south-western frontier and Parāgal Khān's headquarters on the Feni in Chittagong were but military outposts.

These towns and cities had, no doubt, considerable importance at least from the point of view of administration if not also from that of trade and commerce. Each of them had at least a local market kept up by supplies from the adjoining agri-

1. Abid Ali : *op. cit.* pl. v and p. 97 ; see also pl. 3 in *J.A.S.B.* 1932.

2. E. V. Westmacott : "Note on the Site of Fort-Ekdālā District of Dinajpur", *J.A.S.B.* 1874, no. 4, pp. 244-45 ; H. E. Stapleton : "Note on the Historical and Archaeological Results of a Tour in the Districts of Maldah and Dinajpur", *J.A.S.B. N. S.* xxvii, 1932, pp. 155-64.

3. *Ibid.* pl. 4 facing p. 155.

4. Barani : *op. cit.* p. 590.

cultural settlements and also had such fashionable shops and purchasing centres as were demanded by the standard of life of the nobles and members of the royal family living there. It may also be assumed that these groups of people lived on the rents they collected from their estates and their lives were basically dependent on agriculture. The urban settlements mentioned above, were thus distinct from the ports and towns like Sātgaon, Chittagong and Sonārgaon which had primarily commercial importance.

## II

While the towns and cities were serving as the centres of trade and industry, agriculture could flourish only in the rural areas which provided lands for cultivation and pasturage. The repeated mention of the herdsmen in the Bengali literature of the medieval period tends to suggest that they used to graze cattle on fallow lands. It can be inferred here that lands were generally classified into two categories, *khil* and *lāl* or waste land and arable land. The government appears to have assessed only the lands under cultivation to the exclusion of waste lands. The revenue officers of Akbar, as mentioned in the *Chanqī-maṅgal*, contributed to the suffering of the people by recording fallow lands as arable.<sup>1</sup> This clearly indicates that the people in early Mughal Bengal had adequate reason to complain against a type of unfair assessment. We know nothing about the system adopted by the Husain Shāhis in measuring lands. At this point also, Kavikaṅkan may come to our rescue. The story of the oppressive *shiqdār* measuring fifteen *kāṭhās* to a *bighā*<sup>2</sup> shows that a *bighā* was normally made of more than fifteen *kāṭhās*. Thus we get the measuring units of *kāṭhā* and *bighā*, the former being about one-twentieth part of the latter.

1. *Chanqī-maṅgal*, I, p. 22.

2. *Ibid.* Abū'l Faḍl says that a *bighā* could be divided into 20 parts, each known as *biswah*. *Ā'in*, II, p. 67.

We do not know if this system was followed uniformly all over the country. Since Kavikaṅkan composed his poems towards the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the measurement units mentioned by him were probably in vogue during the Husain Shāhi period also, for no radical change seems to have taken place in the system of measurement within a period of three or four decades.

The land-grants of the seventeenth-century rulers of Tippera<sup>1</sup> mention such technical names of land-measure as *kāni* and *droṇa* related by the equation of 1 : 16 which continues even at the present day. It seems certain that these measuring units were in vogue in parts of south-east Bengal also in the earlier period and that they might have continued to be in use in the regions of Tippera and Chittagong brought under control by the Husain Shāhi rulers. The equivalents of *kāni* and *droṇa* in modern measures can be accurately determined. Writing in 1833, Prinsep gives the following table<sup>2</sup> of land measures which obtained in south-east Bengal :

<i>nala</i> of 8 <i>hātas</i> or cubits	—	12 ft.
<i>gaṇḍā</i> of 4 cowries	= 2 × 3 <i>nalas</i>	= 96 sq. yds.
<i>kāni</i> = 20 <i>gaṇḍās</i>	= 12 × 10 <i>nalas</i>	= 1920 sq. yds.
<i>droṇa</i> = 16 <i>kānis</i>	= 80720 sq. yds.	or 6.35 acres.

The table shows that a *kāni* is equal to 39.6875 or 40 decimals approximately. It is also quite clear from the table above that *nala* or reed was used then, as now, in doing the actual work of measurement. In some areas of Noakhali and Chittagong districts, land is measured in terms of *shāhī kāni*,<sup>3</sup> a larger unit believed to have been introduced by the Muslim

1. For land grants issued by Kalyāṇa Māṇikya, Govinda Māṇikya and Dharma Māṇikya, see *Bengali Academy Patrikā*, 1366 P. S., II, pp. 22-23 and 32-34.
2. *Useful Tables*, I. p. 91.
3. *Ibid.*

rulers. We have no precise idea about measures of land used in other parts of the country. As the economy of Bengal was based on agriculture, units of weight used in measuring agricultural products including food grains, appear to have been linked up with land measures. This assumption gets support from the three tables<sup>1</sup> cited below. Kulluka Bhaṭṭa, Raghunandana and the compiler of *Shavdakalpadruma* mention the following system of weights :

8 handfuls	=	1 <i>kuñchi</i>
8 <i>kuñchis</i>	=	1 <i>puskala</i>
4 <i>puskalas</i>	=	1 <i>āḍhaka</i> ( <i>āḍhā</i> )
4 <i>āḍhakas</i>	=	1 <i>droṇa</i>

It is known from several documents that land measures obtaining in certain parts of Bengal including the district of Bankura were as follows :

4 <i>kākas</i> or <i>kākinis</i> ( <i>kāni</i> )	=	1 <i>uāna</i>
50 <i>uānas</i>	=	1 <i>āḍhi</i> ( <i>āḍhā</i> )
4 <i>āḍhis</i>	=	1 <i>droṇa</i>

The unit of *uāna* is, perhaps, explained by the Sundaravana inscription of Lakṣmaṇa Sena according to which

12 <i>aṅgulis</i> (space covered by 12 fingers)	=	1 <i>hāta</i> (hand)
32 <i>hātas</i>	=	1 <i>unmāna</i>

The Delhi *ratl* or maund weighing 18·8 *lb avoirdupois* or about 14 seers<sup>2</sup> of the present day weight standard does not seem to have been in vogue and if Kavikāṇka is to be relied upon, *sera* and *āḍhā*<sup>3</sup> were in use at least in some parts of the sixteenth-century Bengal.

As to the systems of land tenure that prevailed in Bengal in the period in question, materials at our disposal are extremely meagre. Lands could be divided into several classes. As indi-

1. Nihar Ranjan Ray : *Vāṅgalīr Itihāsa*, pp. 227 and 230-32.
2. N. K. Bhattasali : *Coins and Chronology*, p. 144.
3. *Op. cit.* I, p. 23 ; II, p. 510. According to the *Shavdakalpadruma*, 16-20 seers of rice make an *āḍhā* ; Nihar Ranjan Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 228.



cated in the previous chapter,<sup>1</sup> lands might be leased out to local and Portuguese revenue-farmers who used to pay to the government a fixed sum out of what they collected. If *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* is to be relied upon, some of these farmers were under direct control of the provincial governor.<sup>2</sup> Lands granted to the the rulers' relatives and officers in recognition of meritorious services done by them, seem to have been made rent-free. Daulat Wazir tells us that *wazir* Ḥamīd Khān, an officer of Ḥusain Shāh, was allowed to enjoy the possession of two *shiqs* of land in Chittagong.<sup>3</sup> The sultān is said to have given his son-in-law, Qutbul Ashageen, landed estates in Sonārgāon. Although the original sanad seems irretrievably lost, a number of Mughal documents including one of Shāh Shujā',<sup>4</sup> dated the 27th Rabi'-us-thānī, 1051 A.H./5th August, 1641 A.D., confirms Qutbul Ashageen's descendants' claim to the possession of one hundred and thirtythree bighas of cultivable land in the *sarkār* of Sonārgāon, making the estate free from governmental interference "on the plea of taxes, government expenses, skilled and forced labour, hunting, raising repeated crops from farms and gardens,..... 2 percent for choudhury, salami for...and building,.....and percentage for Qānūngo, military governor and collector of revenue".<sup>5</sup> As the document in question was prepared "according to the Sanads granted by the past and present governors",<sup>6</sup> the conditions and immunities enumerated in it, may be taken to be the continuation of similar advantages enjoyed by the original landlord. Although the grant seems rent-free and accompanied with the assignment of the revenue accruing from it, the donee did not probably have the right to alienate it, nor could he transfer it to his son or immediate successor. Qutbul

1. *Supra.* pp. 109-10.

2. *Supra.* p. 109.

3. *Op. cit.* p. 9.

4. For the Persian text and English translation of this document, see *Taifoor Collection* by Bhattasali, x-xv, pls. i-r and vi-r.

5. *Ibid.* p. xiii.

6. *Ibid.* pp. x, xiii, etc.

Ashageen's descendant, Saiyid Muṣṭafa who was willing to transfer to his son, Saiyid Muḥt-ud-dīn, the tract of land he had been enjoying, had to appear before the Mughal authority in order to get the transfer recorded or registered in a document duly endorsed by the seal and the *ṭughrā* of Shāh Jahān.<sup>1</sup> What is not, however, clear to us is whether the grant under consideration was inalienable also in the Ḥusain Shāh period. From this type of land should be distinguished the religious endowments which appear to have been rent-free and which were made by the rulers in favour of mosques and similar other religious foundations.<sup>2</sup> In the Deokot inscription of Ḥusain Shāh dated 918 A.H./1512 A.D.,<sup>3</sup> the renewal of these 'pious grants' has been considered to be a work of religious merit. As the mullās and landlords might defraud legacies, "to prevent such frauds" has been regarded as "the earnest duties of governors and *qāḍīs*".<sup>4</sup> All these seem to indicate that the government used to exercise direct administrative control over some of these religious foundations. It is not, however, insisted that the tenures mentioned above, covered the entire cultivable land.

Although nothing is clearly known about the exact relationship between the farmers or the landlords and the actual tillers of the land, it seems fairly certain that the former could behave, within their domains, as freely as they liked. The document of Shāh Shujā shows that the royal officers were asked to try to "leave the said lands in this management and to allow no

1. *Ibid.* p. x, pl. 1—1.

2. Among such grants, we may include the villages endowed by Ḥusain Shāh for the maintenance of the rest-house connected with the shrine of Nūr Quṭb-i-Ālam; Salim: *op. cit.* p. 135 and Nizām-ud-dīn: *op. cit.* p. 270.

3. *J. A. S. B.* 1872, p. 106; Cunningham: *op. cit.* p. 100 and *E.I.M.*, 1929-30, p. 12-13; S. Ahmad: *Inscriptions*, pp. 190-91.

4. See the Sātgaon inscription of Nuṣrat Shāh. *J. A. S. B.* 1870, pp. 297-98; Dani: *Bibliography*, p. 72; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, pp. 225-26.

change or alteration whatsoever therein".<sup>1</sup> In some areas at least, the tenant had to pay the rent on the basis of the number of ploughs used for tilling the land.<sup>2</sup> We have already suggested that similar system was at work also in pre-Mughal Gujrāt.<sup>3</sup> Its existence in ancient Bengal is hinted at by the presence of the term *hala*<sup>4</sup> in some of the inscriptions of pre-Muslim Bengal, dealing with land tenures. It continued to exist in some parts of eastern Bengal.<sup>5</sup> It is difficult to ascertain how much land could be covered by one plough. In Sylhet district, a *hala* or plough can bring about 10½ *bighas*, or about 3½ acres under cultivation.<sup>6</sup> Buchanan Hamilton, speaking about Dinajpur district in North Bengal, says that "the usual extent which can be cultivated by one plough, is 10 large *bighās*, or 15 Calcutta *bighās*, or 5 acres".<sup>7</sup> Thus the nature of *hala* as a unit of assessment, seems to have varied from place to place.

Nothing is clearly known as to the rate or rates of the state demand. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah who visited Bengal at an earlier period, says that the villagers living by the "blue river" were subjected to the payment of half of their crops as taxes together with some other contributions.<sup>8</sup> Wang-ta-yuan, writing at about the same time, says that the state demand in Muslim Bengal was two-tenth or one-fifth of the total produce.<sup>9</sup> This apparent anomaly may be explained, if we bear in mind that there could be hardly any uniformity in the rate of revenue demands

1. *Op. cit.* p. XIII.

2. *Kavikaṅkan*: *op. cit.* I, 254 cf: "You will pay rupees on each plough and will be afraid of no one".

3. *Supra.* ch. III, p. 121.

4. *History of Bengal*, vol-I. p. 654.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. Quoted, *ibid.*

8. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah: *Rehla*, Eng. tran. p. 241. See also the English translation of the same appended to Bhattasali's *Coins and Chronology*, p. 142.

9. *Viśva-bhārati Annals*, 1945, I, p. 99.

which was likely to vary from locality to locality in accordance with the productivity of the soil and the nature of crops produced in different seasons. Thus in pre-Mughal India, there were several rates ranging from one-half to one-fifth of the total produce.<sup>1</sup> There were variations in the rate prevailing in Akbar's India, the ruler's claim being fixed at one-third in some parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> All that can be conjectured as to the rate of the governmental revenue demand obtaining in Bengal under the Ḥusain Shāhī sultāns, is that it must have been characterized by similar local variations.

How the tenancy right of the peasants was acknowledged by the government is not known. The system of giving *pāṭṭās* to the peasants was generally followed in Mughal and pre-Mughal Bengal. In the *Chañḍī-maṅgal* of Kavikaṅkan and the *Shivāyana* of Rāmeshvara Bhaṭṭācārya, the legendary ryots are depicted as receiving *pāṭṭās* from Indra and Kālaketu respectively.<sup>3</sup> The Ḥusain Shāhīs must have adopted some such measures to ensure the security of the peasants' tenure.

Since Bengal is primarily an agricultural country, it may be reasonably inferred that a vast number of people belonged to the peasantry. The *Shūnya-Purāṇa* depicts a Hindu god adopting agriculture.<sup>4</sup> This may suggest that even the people of noble birth did not dislike agriculture as a profession. Vipradās who has given the picture of the Muslim peasantry of West Bengal, indicates that the cultivators had various economic positions. While some of them, and possibly quite a large majority of them, were land slaves, instances of big farmers engaging hundreds of labourers were also not very infrequent. Hindu farmers with vast landed estates, employing a large

1. I. H. Qureshi : *op cit.* pp. 115, 117 and 118.

2. Moreland : *op. cit.* pp. 86-87, and *India at the death of Akbar*, pp. 99 and 130-31.

3. *Chañḍī-maṅgal*, I, p. 254 ; *Shivāyana* ; pp. 70-71.

4. *Shūnya-Purāṇa* : pp. 182-94.

number of agricultural labourers were common. The style in which the Hindu farmers lived in those days, would compare well with the living standard of the *zamīndārs* of the modern age. In between the big farmers and the landless labourers, there used to be another class of agriculturists who were supervisors of these labourers and also men of influence and power.<sup>1</sup> The cow-keeper<sup>2</sup> who was sociologically in the pastoral stage, seems to have been associated with the agricultural producers, for agriculture could hardly be possible without the help of the cows.

Although agriculture was the backbone of the economy of this country, it was surely of a primitive nature. Implements used in those days did not differ from those of our times. These included the plough and the yoke drawn by cows, scythe and others.<sup>3</sup> Very often the cultivators had to depend on the mercy of rain. There was no properly developed irrigation system. Canals were possibly dug to bring water to the cultivable lands. The poor peasants used to borrow seeds from their rich neighbours or landlords. It was the general idea of the people that the cultivators were nourishing the people of the country by maintaining the goddess Lakṣmī at their houses.<sup>4</sup>

The deltaic region of Bengal which is proverbially fertile, used to produce numerous crops. Of the three different methods of sowing paddy, broadcasting, drill and transplantation from the original seed-bed, the last one has always been convenient to the cultivator.<sup>5</sup> Paddy was generally planted in the month of *Shrāvaṇa* and the reaping of harvest was possible in the month of *Agrahāyaṇa*.<sup>6</sup> The *Shūnya-Purāṇa* has thus referred to what is

1. Vipradās : *Manasā-vijaya* : pp. 63, 66-67 ; Vijaya Gupta : p. 155.
2. *Ibid.* pp. 53-55 ; Vipradās : *op. cit.* pp. 63-66.
3. *Ibid.* p. 63 ; *Shūnya-Purāṇa*, p. 184.
4. *Ibid.* p. 185 ; *Shivāyana*, pp. 68 and 72-73.
5. *History of Bengal*, 1, p. 650.
6. *Shūnya-Purāṇa*, p. 186.

now a days called *āman* paddy. But this was not the only kind of paddy, for Abū'l Faḍl informs us that it was "sown and reaped three times a year in the same piece of land with little injury to the crop". He has mentioned a special variety the stalk of which used to grow up with the gradual rise of water-level so that no harm could come to the crop from water.<sup>1</sup> The names of the different kinds of paddy have been mentioned in the *Shūnya-Purāṇa* and the *Shivāyana* and the lists given by them seem to be exhaustive.<sup>2</sup> It seems that these names were of a local character and they varied from place to place. In fact, rice was of various kinds. Abū'l Faḍl corroborates the information supplied by Bengali sources, when he says that a large vase would be filled up, "if a single grain of each kind were collected".<sup>3</sup> There were other agricultural products among which cotton, sugarcane, ginger, long pepper, turmeric, betelnut, radish, pulses and lentil may be mentioned.<sup>4</sup> Most of the fruits which we find to-day were available in those days also.<sup>5</sup> The list of the products of Bengal, found in the accounts left by the Chinese and European travellers who visited medieval Bengal, is too long to be reproduced here.

The agriculturists had to face certain difficulties which seem to have been insurmountable. If there was any draught, they were sure to be undone. Those who were living in the territories of the petty landlords, had to depend on the mercy of the latter. We do not know what measures were adopted by the government to help the agriculturists in overcoming these difficulties. If *Kavikaṅkan* is to be relied upon, the cultivator used to enjoy, in times of natural calamities, various concessions from the local

1. *Ā'in* : vol. II, p. 134.
2. *Shūnya-Purāṇa*, pp. 191-94 ; *Shivāyana*, p. 113.
3. *Ā'in*, II, p. 134.
4. Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, p. 145 ; Vipradās : *op. cit.* p. 149 ; Vijaya Gupta, *op. cit.* pp. 123, 130 and 132-35.
5. Some of these fruits were mango, orange, lemon and banana ; Barbosa : *op. cit.* p. 147 ; *Kavikaṅkan-chandī* : II, pp. 510, 511 and 518.

landlords such as the renewal of the *pāṭṭā*, partial remission of land taxes and unrestricted purchase and sale of grains which might be exempted from governmental taxes.<sup>1</sup>

### III

The sea-borne trade of Bengal which was in a flourishing state, presupposes the growth of internal trade also about which nothing is known. The agricultural products and domestic animals which were numerous must have been sold and purchased in the local markets over which the foreign merchants do not seem to have had any direct control. Money-lenders, money-changers and merchants together with local markets where common people used to come to exchange their commodities, find repeated mention in vernacular literature.<sup>2</sup> Internal trade, when compared with the extensive maritime commerce of this period, appears to be insignificant. The local merchants were probably supplying manufactured goods to the foreign merchants.

Barbosa found the coastal region overwhelmingly populated by the Muslims who had obviously taken to trade and commerce. Attracted by the largeness, wealth and climate of the city of 'Bengala', a large number of Arab, Persian, Abyssinian and Indian merchants had arrived there. They possessed great ships "after the fashion of Macca" by which they were carrying on trade and commerce with the different parts of the world. They were carrying the numerous products of this country to "Charamandel, Malacca, Camatra, Peeguu Cambaya and Ceilam".<sup>3</sup> Varthema refers to "the richest merchants" of the city of 'Banghella' together with its cotton and silk stuffs which used to "go through all Turkey, through Syria, through Persia, through Arabia Felix, through Ethiopia, and through all India".<sup>4</sup>

1. *Op. cit.* I, pp. 253-54.

2. *Ibid.* I, pp. 22, 116-121, 265, 270, 274, etc.,

3. Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, pp. 135-145.

4. Varthema : *The Travels of Ludovico Di Varthema*, p. 212.

Speaking about the volume of trade which Bengal possessed, Joao de Baros maintains that "the King of Bengalla alone held as much as he (Bahādur Shāh of Gujrāt) and the king of Narsinga (Vijayanagar) held jointly."<sup>1</sup> Thus the foreign travellers have referred to the glory of the maritime commerce which Bengal possessed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. We find a definite confirmation of these reports in the account of Mahuan, the Chinese traveller, who visited Bengal in the fifteenth century. He remarks, "the rich build ships, in which they carry on commerce with foreign nations ; many are engaged in trade....."<sup>2</sup> Almost all the *Manasā-maṅgals* including those of Vijaya Gupta and Vipradās, have devoted a large number of pages to the description of the maritime activities of the heroes depicted therein. Even if we make sufficient allowance for the poetic fancy and hyperbolic display of imagination exercised by these poets, it seems almost fairly certain that Bengal had established a net-work of commercial ties with the different parts of the world. According to Ralph Fitch, the cotton cloth and rice of Sonārgaon were exported to India, Ceylon, Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra and other countries.<sup>3</sup> Marco Polo and Ibn Baṭṭūṭah have witnessed the commercial progress and prosperity of medieval Bengal. Again Kavikaṅkan has said that the merchants from Bengal had reached Ceylon and Gujrāt via Utkal and Coromandel coast and that Magadh, Mathurā, Vijayanagar and Mārāṭhā country were not unknown to them.<sup>4</sup>

An analysis of the accounts left by the foreign travellers shows that the exports of Bengal included rice, wheat, cotton cloth, silk fabrics and sugar.<sup>5</sup> These sold at an incredibly

1. *Da Asia* : *op. cit.* p. 246.

2. The Account of Mahuan : *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 530.

3. Ralph Fitch : *Purchas His Pilgrims*, x, p. 185.

4. Kavikaṅkan : *op. cit.* i, pp. 224-30 and ii, p. 763.

5. Barbosa : *op. cit.* ii, pp. 145-47 ; Vasco da Gama : quoted by Campos : *op. cit.* p. 25 ; Ralf Fitch : *op. cit.* p. 185 ; Varthema : *op. cit.* p. 212.



higher price in the foreign countries. "Cloth which sell on the spot for twentytwo shillings and six pence fetch ninety shillings in Calicut", says Vasco da Gama.<sup>1</sup> Similar views have also been expressed by Barbosa : "...a *quintal* of sugar would bring in one thousand and three hundred *reis* in Malabar, a *choutar* of the best kind six hundred *reis*, a *sinabafa* two *cruzados*, and a piece of the best *beatilha* three hundred *reis* ; and thus those who carried them thither made great profits by selling them."<sup>2</sup> In view of the Portuguese character of the weight and currency referred to here, it is, no doubt, difficult to ascertain the prices of the commodities mentioned by Barbosa. But an attempt may be made to get a rough idea about them. A *quintal* was generally equivalent to 128 *lbs*.<sup>3</sup> A kind of Portuguese coin called *cruzado* was worth 420 *reis* which amounted to 9 shillings, according to the value ascribed by Yule to the *reis* in the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The price of the commodities exported may be converted into modern money and the valuation of the current prices drawn up in accordance with the modern standard of weight. This is shown in the following table :

Commodities	Portuguese weight or measure	Modern weight	Portuguese price	Modern price
sugar	1 <i>quintal</i>	128 <i>lbs</i> .	1300 <i>reis</i>	£1 8s. approx
<i>chautar</i>	20 by 3 or 4 Portuguese yds.		600 <i>reis</i>	13s. approx
<i>sinabafa</i>	„		2 <i>cruzados</i> or 840 <i>reis</i>	18s. approx
<i>beatilha</i>	„		300 <i>reis</i>	6½s. annrox

1. Quoted by Campos : *op. cit.* p. 25.

2. Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, pp. 146-47 ; *chautar*, *sinabafa* and *beatila* are varieties of cloth, each piece measuring 20 by 3 or 4 Portuguese yds ; see below.

3. Campos : *op. cit.* p. 27, f.n ; Barbosa, *op. cit.* I, p. 157, f.n. I.

4. *Ibid.* I, p. 65, f.n. I ; Campos : *op. cit.* p. 33, f.n.

These were the prices of the commodities of Bengal sold at Malabar, which must have been much lower in Bengal. Although no precise idea can be formed about the prices of these articles in Bengal, only a somewhat vague speculation is possible. The statement of Vasco da Gama shows that the cloth which would sell in Bengal for 22 shillings could fetch 90 shillings in Calicut, so that the ratio between its prices at Calicut and in Bengal was 4:1 approximately. We do not know if this proportion applied to other articles as well.

Of the imports of Bengal, Abū'l Faḍl mentions salt, diamonds, emeralds, pearls, cornelians and agates<sup>1</sup>—a list which does not materially differ from that obtaining in the *Manasā-maṅgal* poems of the time. In a subsequent section, we have shown that Bengal had industrial products some of which must have been exported to foreign countries.

A very prominent feature of the economic life of Bengal was the trade in eunuchs and slaves alluded to by Barbosa, Ibn Battūṭah and Marco Polo.<sup>2</sup> The Muslim merchants used to buy native boys and sell them after castrating them and giving them proper training and placed them sometimes in charge of their *harem* and estates. Some of these slaves rendered valuable service to the Muslim sultāns as governors and captains.<sup>3</sup>

The account of Barbosa taken together with that of Varthema shows that there were two principal sea-routes in those days. One of them led in the south-eastern direction touching the countries like Burma, Arakan, Pegu, Ava, Siam, Malacca, Sumatra, Sunda, Java, the Spice Islands, Celebes, Borneo and Champa and extending upto China.<sup>4</sup> The other route led in the

1. *Ā'in*, II, p. 135.

2. Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, p. 147 ; *Reḥla*, p. 235 ; *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 3rd ed. vol. II, p. 115.

3. Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, p. 147.

4. *Ibid.* pp. 148-215 ; Ibn Battūṭah : *Reḥla*, p. 241 and Barbosa :

south-western direction passing Orissa, Coromandel, Ceylon and Malabar coast, and reaching Arabia and Abyssinia *via* the Persian Gulf and the Arabian sea.<sup>1</sup> Entering Bengal at the point of Chittagong, sea-going ships could perhaps go as far as Sonārgaon, following the course of the river Meghna. This route was followed by Ibn Baṭṭūṭah and also by the Chinese ambassadors who visited the court of the sultāns of the early fifteenth-century Bengal.<sup>2</sup> The routes indicate that the products of Bengal were reaching the countries lying on them. The market for Bengal goods extended thus from Abyssinia to China. One may notice in this connection the comparative insignificance of the land routes along which Bengal goods could pass out of this country. One explanation seems plausible here. Bengal was politically isolated from her neighbours with whom her relation was far from friendly. Probably the hostilities of the neighbouring rulers prevented the Ḥusain Shāhis from opening any land routes across the adjacent regions. In fact, maritime commerce was the main feature of the economic life of the country.

Bengal had several ports and towns which greatly facilitated her sea-borne trade. Saptagrāma which had replaced the ancient Tāmrālipti, continued to enjoy a unique position down to the middle of the sixteenth century. It figures quite prominently in medieval Bengali literature. The poet Vipradās who was the contemporary of Ḥusain Shāh, has described the religious sanctity and economic affluence enjoyed by Saptagrāma.<sup>3</sup> Bṛndāvanadās, the author of the *Chaitanya-bhāgavat* has incidentally

*op. cit.* II, p. 145, noticed the presence of *junks* or Chinese ships in the rivers of Bengal. It seems fairly certain that China had trade relations with Bengal. As a matter of fact, her ships visited the principal islands of the Malay Archipelago, India, Arabia and the Persian Gulf; Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, pp. 214-15, f.n.

1. *Ibid.* II, pp. 1-145. Varthema : *op. cit.* p. 212.
2. *Rehla*, pp. 235 and 241; *Coins and Chronology*, pp. 146-47; *Chinese Accounts*; *op. cit.* pp. 117, 120-21, 123.
3. *Op. cit.* pp. 142-43.

referred to the merchant class of Saptagrāma.<sup>1</sup> The description of Ralph Fitch clearly shows that this city was frequented by the Arab merchants as late as the last quarter of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Caesar Frederick who visited Bengal in 1567 says, "In the Port of Satagan every yeere they lade thirtie or five and thirtie ships great and small with Rice, Cloth of Bombast of divers sorts, Lacca, great abundance of sugar, Mirabolans dried and preserved, long Pepper, Oyle of Zerzeline, and many other sorts of merchandise".<sup>3</sup> In fact, the ancient city of Saptagrāma was a great riverport in those days. Considering its commercial importance, the Portuguese used to call it *Porto Piqueno*. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the river bed near Saptagrāma dried up so that Joao de Barros found this port "not so convenient for the entry and departure of ships".<sup>4</sup> Sātgaon had thus to yield gradually place to Hooghly which began to be frequented by the Portuguese. Sonārgaon which was visited by Ibn Battūta, Mahuan and Ralph Fitch, used to export rice and cotton cloth to the different parts of the world. Chittagong held a precarious position in the commercial life of Bengal, for its possession was being disputed by the rulers of Bengal, Tippera and Arakan. But it was of unique importance to the Portuguese who subsequently called it *Porto Grande*. The lucrative positions held by Chittagong and Sātgaon attracted the covetous eyes of the Portuguese who began to control their custom-houses towards the end of the Husain Shāhi period. Sātgaon, Sonārgaon and Chittagong have been clearly located in the map of Joao de Barros. It was possibly towards the end of the sixteenth century only that Shripur which appears on the maps of later cartographers like Von den Broucke and Rennell, became a prominent trade-centre. One can easily realize the role played by these prosperous cities, with their rich and extensive hinterlands, in the economic life of Bengal.

1. *Op. cit.* antya, v, p. 381.

2. *Purchas His Pilgrims*, x, p. 182.

3. *Ibid.* p. 114.

4. *Da Asia: op. cit.* p. 244.

They maintained the economic and cultural links between Bengal and the distant parts of the world.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the sea-borne trade of Bengal had completely gone out of the reach of the local traders and it was being thoroughly controlled by the Arab and Persian merchants who were enjoying almost a complete monopoly in the navigation of the Eastern seas. These traders were maintaining oceanic communication between Bengal and the Persian Gulf area and were carrying the products of this country to the East as far as China and also to Arabia and Abyssinia. They were subsequently overpowered by the Portuguese and other European traders. Barbosa's statement that the Arabs and the Persians were largely found in the cities of Bengal, indicates that they had not yet made room for the Portuguese whose commercial activities gained momentum in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The period between 1517 and 1538 is marked by a significant conflict between the sultāns of Bengal and the Portuguese merchants who were persistently endeavouring to gain a foot-hold in this country. The year 1536 is significant in the commercial history of this country, for in this year Martim Affonso de Mello was allowed by Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Maḥmūd Shāh III, the ruling sultān, to build factories in Chittagong and Sātgaon and control the custom-houses of these ports. The Portuguese merchants received grants of land which eventually gave them rent-receiving interest in this country.<sup>1</sup> Husain Shāhī Bengal thus marked the beginning of that inevitable historical process which eventually put an end to the Arab supremacy in the field of maritime commerce and which accelerated the growth of the Portuguese as a European trading nation in India. The Arabs did not, however, completely disappear from the field, nor did the Portuguese activities assume any significant magnitude. The Portuguese settlements had their growth at a subsequent period.

1. *Supra*. Ch. II, pp. 86-87; *Da Asia : op. cit.* pp. 246-48; Faria y Souza : *op. cit.* pp. 220, 314, 417-20.

## IV

The commercial activities discussed above presuppose the growth of industry in this country. As a matter of fact, Bengal made considerable progress in respect of industries like textiles sugar, metal-work, stone-carving and ship-building.

The variety and richness of the textile manufacture of Bengal were sufficient to attract the attention of the foreign travellers who have given valuable information about the textiles that obtained in the country. Barbosa noticed different kinds of fine cloth such as *estravantes* used as headdress by the Portuguese ladies and as turbans by the Arabs and the Persians, *mamonas*, *duguazas*, *choutares*, *sinabafa* and *beatilha*, each of these pieces measuring 3 by 20 or 4 by 20 Portuguese yards.<sup>1</sup> Although it is difficult to identify these fabrics, it may be tentatively suggested here that these terms stand respectively for *sirband*, *malmal* or *maslin*, *dugazi* cloth, *chadar*, *sinaband* and *butidar*.<sup>2</sup> Varthema who wrote about Bengal in the first decade of the sixteenth century, mentions varieties of fabric such as *bairam*, *mamone*, *lizati*, *ciantar*, *doazar* and *sinabaff*,<sup>3</sup> most of their names being phonetically similar to those found by Barbosa. Chinese travellers have mentioned several kinds of fine cotton fabric known as *pi-chih*, *man-cheti*, *sha-na-kieh*, *hin-pei-tung-ta-li*, *sha-ta-urh* and *mo-hei-mo-leh*.<sup>4</sup> Of other foreign travellers who have incidentally referred to the cotton fabrics of medieval Bengal, mention may be made of Marco Polo, Ibn Baṭṭūṭah and Caesar Frederick.<sup>5</sup> Abu'l Faḥl informs us

1. *Op. cit.* II, pp. 145-47.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 145-46; see the translator's notes.

3. *Op. cit.* p. 212.

4. Mahuan's Account of Bengal; *J. R. A. S.* 1895, pp. 531-32. For an identification of these terms, see John Beames's notes, *ibid.*, p. 899. These names appear also in other Chinese accounts translated in *Viśva-bhāratī Annals*, *op. cit.* pp. 119-20, 125-26 and 132.

5. *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, II, p. 115; *Rehla*, p. 235 and *Purchas His Pilgrims*, x, p. 114.

that the *sarkār* of Bārbakābād produced “a fine cloth called Gaṅgājal” and that the *sarkār* of Sonārgāon used to manufacture “a species of muslin very fine and in great quantity”.<sup>1</sup> Jute fabrics seem to have constituted another variety of textile goods. The terms like *pāṭneta* and *pāter pāchrā*<sup>2</sup> which frequently obtain in the Bengali literature of the time, suggest that these fabrics were perhaps manufactured, like many other varieties, from jute. If Abū'l Faḍl is to be relied upon,<sup>3</sup> sack cloth was produced in the *sarkār* of Ghorāghaṭ. Silk industry appears to have made considerable progress in the period under review. While Mahuan refers to silk worms and silk fabrics of the fifteenth century Bengal,<sup>4</sup> Varthema mentions silk stuffs as one of the principal exports of this country.<sup>5</sup> It seems that *sarkār* Ghorāghaṭ was quite famous for its silk products.<sup>6</sup>

Thus it is fairly certain that Bengal was enjoying much prominence as a centre of textile manufacture. Cotton produced in the extensive fields of the country,<sup>7</sup> was generally made into finished goods by the local artisans about whose relation with the local and foreign merchants, nothing is clearly known. Clothes were generally “spun in wheels by men and woven by them”.<sup>8</sup> The products of cottage industry that flourished in the country not only met the requirements of the local people, but also enabled the local merchants to earn a good profit by exporting them to the different parts of the world.<sup>9</sup>

The process of the manufacture of sugar seems to have

1. *Ā'in*, II, p. 136.
2. *Vipradās* : *op. cit.* p. 115 and *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛttivāsa : ed. D. C. Sen, p. 3.
3. *Ā'in*, II, p. 136.
4. *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 532.
5. *Op. cit.* p. 212.
6. *Ā'in*, II, p. 136.
7. Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, p. 145 and Varthema : *op. cit.* p. 212.
8. Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, p. 146 ; Varthema : *op. cit.* p. 214.
9. Barbosa : pp. 145-47.

been widely known in the country. The sugar that was prepared here from locally available cane, was extremely white and of good quality. The people did not know how to crystallize it ; so wrapping it "as a powder in parcels of untanned leather, well sewn," they used to export it to the different countries including Malabar and Cambay where it sold at a high price.<sup>1</sup>

Metallic industry must have flourished at least in some parts of the country. Abū'l Faḍl says that there were iron mines in the *sarkār* of Bāzuhā.<sup>2</sup> Although we do not know how far these mines were workable, it seems fairly certain that blacksmiths and goldsmiths constituted distinct economic classes by themselves. The agriculturists of Bengal must have needed the services of blacksmiths for manufacturing and repairing agricultural implements. Mahuan noticed such commodities as painted ware, basins, steel guns, cups, knives and scissors selling in the open market.<sup>3</sup> Foreign accounts and Bengali literature give vivid description of women wearing gold ornaments of a fairly wide variety.<sup>4</sup> Firishṭah tells us that the wealthy people of Bengal not only used gold vessels, but also considered it to be an honour to display them in occasional social gatherings.<sup>5</sup> Allowing for obvious exaggerations which these accounts are likely to contain, it may be reasonably inferred that jewellery constituted a profession for a considerable number of people.

Stone-carvers' art and craft appear to have attained to a considerable degree of perfection. Numerous Husain Shāhī

1. *Ibid.* 146 ; cf. also Varthema : *op. cit.* p. 212, and Ibn Baṭṭūṭah : *Rehla*, p. 235.
2. *Ā'in*, II, p. 136.
3. *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 532.
4. *Infra*. ch. IX ; Chinese accounts in *Viśva-bhāratī Annals*, *op. cit.* pp 122, 124 and 132 ; Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, p. 148.
5. *Op. cit.* II, p. 301.



inscriptions with their elegant styles of writing and beauty of execution eloquently speak of the artistic skill of the stone-carvers. The use of stones in the Husain Shāhī buildings of Gauḍ and Paṇḍuā together with the representation of terracotta art on them<sup>1</sup> undoubtedly testifies to the existence of a group of stone-cutters. The construction of the numerous brick buildings of the period in question, must have provided occupation to a good number of brick-workers.

Another minor local product was mat which often resembled "woven silk".<sup>2</sup> Bengali literature of the time makes frequent mention of *lohit-pāṭi* or red mat and *shītal-pāṭi* or cool mat.<sup>3</sup> White paper manufactured from the bark of a tree looked as glossy as deer-skin.<sup>4</sup> We do not know if the manufacture of mat and paper had assumed the nature and form of any industry.

Ship-building seems to have developed into a considerable industry. Ocean-going ships were made in Bengal.<sup>5</sup> The extensive forests of the *sarkār* of Bāzuhā used to supply "long and thick timbers" with which masts could be made.<sup>6</sup>

Thus it is evident that the extensive commerce of the country greatly rested on the various industrial products which Bengal manufactured in the period in question.

## V

With the progress of civilization, the system of barter began gradually to recede into the background yielding place

1. *Infra*. ch. viii.

2. *Ā'in*, II, p. 134.

3. *Kavikāṅkan* : *op. cit.* I, p. 259 and Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* p. 123.

4. See Mahuan's account in *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 532 ; see also Chinese accounts. *op. cit.* p. 126.

5. Mahuan's account : *op. cit.* p. 530.

6. *Ā'in*, II, p. 136.

to money. The *Maṅgal* poems state that it was universally prevailing in this country. This view seems hardly tenable. Mahuan found silver coins called *tanka* and sea-shells or cowries in wide circulation in Bengal. He says, "All large business transactions are carried on with this coin, but for small purchases they use a sea-shell called by the foreigners *Kao-li*".<sup>1</sup> In the face of this categorical statement about the currency of the fifteenth century Bengal, the information supplied by the vernacular literature can hardly be credited. It seems that the poets have simply reproduced their memory of the remote past. In fact, the mint towns of the Husain Shāhi rulers, which were many in number, issued coins of various sizes and weights. The cowries which represented money of the lowest denomination, were in circulation down to the eighteenth century and their use lingered in rural areas till the end of the nineteenth century. The use of cowries may be explained by the extreme cheapness of commodities so that the people did not have to use even silver coins (which were undoubtedly of a higher value) in buying the necessities of life. As cowries could be used most conveniently in day-to-day affairs, the use of coins must have been very restricted. Coins were used, as pointed out by Mahuan, only in large-scale transactions which inland and foreign trade involved.

The system followed in counting cowries was like this : 4 cowries make a *gaṇḍā*, 5 *gaṇḍās* a *buḍi*, 4 *buḍis* a *paṇa*, 16 *paṇas* a *kāhan* and 10 *kāhans* a rupee. This method appears not only in Abū'l Faḍl's account of Orissa in the *Ā'in*,<sup>2</sup> but also in the antiquated arithmetical tables of Bengal. Vernacular

1. Mahuan's Account of Bengal : *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 530. This information is available in other Chinese sources, such as *Ying Yai Shenglan* and *Sing Yang Ch'ao Tien Lu*; tran. in *Viśva-bhārati Annals*, 1945, 1, pp. 117, 123 and 125.
2. *Op. cit.* II, pp. 138-39. Thus, according to this calculation, a rupee is equal to  $4 \times 5 \times 4 \times 16 \times 10$  or 14,400 cowries. The above may be compared with the following table which gives a slightly different

literature<sup>1</sup> incidentally refers to the system. It is not, however, clear whether Abū'l Faḍl mentions the rupee of 172·8 grains or the Afghān coin having a slightly higher weight. That cowries were equated to the silver coin at a certain ratio, can hardly be doubted. Bengali poems speak of *ṭākā* and *ānā*<sup>2</sup> of which the latter does not appear to have existed as a metallic piece of small denomination and it was in all probability a unit of counting cowries<sup>3</sup> by which a full-rupee was divisible into 16 equal fractional units. The inference gets strength from the rarity of such coins in pre-Mughal Bengal as the half-rupee and the one-fourth rupee and from the total absence of one-*ānā* pieces. As already indicated, the general prevalence of cowries in the currency system of medieval Bengal had rendered the minting of lower denominational coins quite unnecessary.

The Ḥusain Shāhī rulers issued numerous silver coins and only a few gold coins. Copper coins were totally absent. Out of a large number of coins of pre-Mughal Bengal, discovered so far, we have got only a single copper coin of the reign of Bārbak Shāh. It seems that the rulers had hardly any necessity of issuing copper coins, for they were being represented by cowries.

There is a sudden influx of silver coins in the Ḥusain system prevailing in Bengal in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century :

$$\begin{aligned} 4 \text{ cowries} &= 1 \text{ gaṇḍā} \\ 20 \text{ gaṇḍās} &= 1 \text{ paṇa} \\ 5 \text{ paṇas} &= 1 \text{ ānā.} \end{aligned}$$

Prinsep's *Useful Tables*, p. 1.

1. Kavikaṅkan : *op. cit.* i, 213 and ii, 510-13, f.n. *Vijaya Gupta* ; *op. cit.* p. 153.
2. Kavikaṅkan : *op. cit.* i, p. 22. We are told that in Akbar's time, the *poddār* (foṭahdār) deducted  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ānas from the rupee and the thing worth one rupee was selling at 10 ānās.
3. According to traditional tables, 20 gaṇḍās of cowries make an ānā. That the ratio was subject to fluctuation is proved by Prinsep's table cited above.

Shāhī period. One may wonder at the richness of the variety of these coins, which seems to have been absent in the earlier period. This undoubtedly suggests that there was a considerable increase in the volume of foreign trade in this period. There are three types of silver coins of the Husain Shāhī rulers, the average weight of which is 160 grains, 80 grains and 40 grains respectively. Thus the ratio between the weight of the first and the second types is 2 : 1 which is also the proportionate relation between the weight of the second and the third types. The ratio between the weight of the first and the third types is 4 : 1. While the first type is represented by numerous issues whose weight varies from 148 to 170 grains,<sup>1</sup> coins belonging to the second and the third types are comparatively small in number.<sup>2</sup> It seems that these three types of coins stand for the full, one-half and one-fourth rupee respectively. The fractional issues were struck in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh in 925/1519 from the mint of Husainābād tentatively identified with Gauḍ. What considerations influenced the governmental decision to issue the one-half and one-fourth rupees, is not clearly known. Of the predecessors of Nuṣrat, Ilyās Shāh was the only suḷṭān to mint half-rupee pieces which have the mint town of Firūzābād and the weight of 83-84 grains.<sup>3</sup> This weight shows that the coins under reference together with the fractional pieces of Nuṣrat are based on the 172·8-grains standard. Various coins of smaller

1. Wright ; *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, pp. 172-80, nos. 168-228 ; Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* pp. 45-48, 50, 52 and 54 ; S. Ahmed : *Supplement*, pp. 63-72, nos. 159-91, 193-226 ; Botham, *op. cit.* pp. 166-75 ; Botham and Friel : *op. cit.* 148-61 ; Stapleton : *Provincial Cabinet of Coins, East Bengal and Assam* : *op. cit.* pp. 134-37. These coins vary also in size.
2. Botham : *op. cit.* pp. 173-74, nos. 9-11 and 14 ; pl. II, nos. 2-4 ; Botham and Friel : *op. cit.* p. 158, nos. 17-20 ; S. Ahmed : *Supplement*, p. 66, no. 192.
3. Botham : *op. cit.* p. 150, nos. 33-34 ; no. 5 on pl. I. These two coins are included also in Botham and Friel : *Supplement*, pp. 132-33, nos.  $\frac{2}{89}$  and  $\frac{2}{90}$  ; no. 5 on pl. I.

denomination were in almost continuous circulation in North India during the whole pre-Mughal period. Ilyās Shāh appears to have been influenced by the fractional coinage of the sultāns of Delhi in issuing the half-rupee pieces intended to facilitate the monetary transactions of the people of the metropolitan city of Firūzābād or Pāṇḍuā. The practice was revived by Nuṣrat Shāh who had perhaps a similar end in view. But the experiment in the field of currency ended in failure which is indicated by the rarity of fractional issues<sup>1</sup> of the ruler. The people of Firūzābād and Husainābād so much acquainted with cowries, had adequate reasons to be indifferent to the coins of smaller denominations.

The maximum weight of the coin or coins issued by each of the sultāns of the period under review is shown in the following table<sup>2</sup> :

Sultāns	Maximum weight	Date	Mint
Husain	167 grains	899 A.H.	The Treasury
Nuṣrat	165 grains	925 A.H.	Husainābād and Fatḥābād
Firūz	164 grains	939 A.H.	Husainābād
Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Maḥmūd	170 grains	935 A.H.	Husainābād

1. The total number of these coins including a duplicate issue is four.
2. For the coins of Husain with the maximum weight, see Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, no. 181, p. 174 ; pl. v ; for the coin of Nuṣrat, *ibid.* no. 207, p. 177 and *Supplement to Catalogue*, II, no. 186, p. 66 ; for the coin of Firūz, *Catalogue*, II, no. 220, p. 179, pl. vi ; for the coin of Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Maḥmūd, *Supplement to Catalogue*, II, no. 216, p. 70. The coin of Maḥmūd referred to in the table was issued before he became the ruler of Bengal. This problem has been discussed elsewhere ; *supra*, ch. II, p. 78

The average weight of the coins cited in the above table being approximately 166 grains Troy, they significantly differ from the Delhi prototypes under the Lūdīs, the standard weight of which was generally 145 grains.<sup>1</sup>

Gold was also coming to this country as a result of its foreign trade. Two gold coins of the reign of Ḥusain Shāh have been discovered,<sup>2</sup> whereas we have found only five gold coins<sup>3</sup> of the whole pre-Ḥusain Shāhī Muslim Bengal. The weight of these two Ḥusain Shāhī coins is 176.4 and 159 grains respectively. The average weight of these coins is, therefore, 167 grains approximately. The ratio between the value of gold and that of silver can hardly be ascertained, for material at our disposal on this point is not at all sufficient. Not a single gold coin of the successors of Ḥusain Shāh has been discovered. The scarcity of gold coins which we notice in this period, may be explained here. Two suggestions are possible. The later Ḥusain Shāhīs were probably depositing gold coins in the treasury with a view to meeting any emergency that might arise out of the state of war existing between Bengal and her neighbours. Again, it might be possible that gold was over-valued. In other words, the face value of the gold coin was less than its intrinsic value so that the people melted it down in order to get a profit out of it. In that case, silver was cheaper than gold and silver coins which represented bad money, drove away good money out of circulation. But Gresham's Law does not seem to explain satisfactorily the situation in Bengal. We have

and *infra*, appendix A. The maximum weight of his regular issues is 168 grains; Wright : *Catalogue*, II, p. 180, no. 225; S. Ahmed : *Supplement*, p. 71, no. 233.

1. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. I, p. 11.
2. *Ibid.* no. 167, p. 172, pl. v; Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* nos. 108 and 122, pp. 44 and 47, pls. v and vi.
3. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, nos. 9, 23(a) and 152, pp. 147, 150 and 169, pls. I and IV; Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* no. 81, p. 34, pl. IV; Bhattasali : *Hakim H. Rahman Collection*, no. 119.

already pointed out that commodities were extremely cheap in those days. This is what we find in the account of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah who had the opportunity of noticing the prices of certain articles obtaining in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Because of this cheapness, people could purchase their necessities with cowries representing money of the lowest denomination. This explains why gold coins were issued in small numbers. Their use must have been quite rare. They seem to have served the purpose of souvenirs, for 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh issued such coins commemorating his accession to the throne of Bengal and signaling his victory over the rulers of Orissa and Kāmrupa.<sup>2</sup> Thus the limited use of gold coins, which we have noticed above, does not seem to suggest the scarcity of gold in Bengal, for her foreign trade must have brought to her certain quantity of gold and silver. As already mentioned, the gold and silver coins of the period under discussion, were based on the standard weight of 172·8 grains=100 *ratis*, which points to the use of *dhāna*, *rati* and *māsā*<sup>3</sup> in weighing the precious metals.

## VI

Before concluding this discussion, it is necessary to mention the different socio-economic groups which constituted the bulk of the Bengali population. We have already seen that the cultivators who were directly connected with the production of wealth, could be divided into several categories and that the big farmers and landless labourers were not absent in the country. The weavers and the producers of different cloths were numerous. Weavers, it seems, formed a major section of Muslim

1. *Rehla*, pp. 224-35; *Coins and Chronology*, p. 144.

2. *Supra*, pp. 26-27, f.n.

3. The following table gives the equation of these weights which were in vogue also in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries :

$$4 \text{ dhānas} = 1 \text{ rati}$$

$$8 \text{ ratis} = 1 \text{ māṣā}$$

Prinsep's *Useful Tables*, pt. 1, p. 62.

population in rural Bengal.<sup>1</sup> They were economically self-sufficient, if not also affluent. Vocationally, they did not have anything to do with agriculture. Subodhan, the Muslim weaver in the *Manasā-maṅgal* used to purchase all his necessities including sweet potatoes and arum. The purchase of these vegetable products, signified two features. The weaver community was so much industrialized that it did not take the trouble to produce even these common vegetables for its kitchen requirements. Secondly, it might have been rich enough to buy these from market rather than produce them itself. Purchase of luxuries by Subodhan for his wife only indicates the comparative affluence of the weaver community which was perhaps natural in those days when Bengal was an exporter of cloth to the various parts of the world. The female folk of the community did not have to help the weavers in their work.<sup>2</sup> It may be inferred here that the weavers were so much self-sufficient that they did not feel the necessity of dragging their women folk from the management of household affairs to the economic struggle of life. The looms were supplied by a group of people called *shānākar*<sup>3</sup> or maker of looms, in Kavikaṅkan's time. These people seem to have constituted a minor economic class. We have already noticed the growth of metallic industry which must have involved the labour of various classes such as goldsmiths and blacksmiths. The local merchant as depicted in the contemporary vernacular literature, had not yet gone up in the social ladder and was yet a member of the lower class. It is highly probable that these people served as the connecting link between the producers of industrial goods and the foreign traders.

The Brahmins adopted teaching as a profession. Vipradās' description of the Brahminical society of Saptagrāma clearly indicates that it devoted itself to the worship of gods,

1. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 59-61 ; Vipradās : *op. cit.* p. 80.

2. Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, p. 146.

3. *Chandī-maṅgal*, I, 261.



teaching and learning philosophy and that poverty and misery could never touch the lives of its members.<sup>1</sup> In fact, some of the Brahmins of the period under review might have a considerable amount of wealth and influence. The Kāyasthas were proverbially the clerical group of people. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāj has mentioned how assiduously these people were serving the ruling class.<sup>2</sup> The Vaidyas were traditionally following their medical practices. Thus a notable section of the Hindu population being composed of Brahmins, Kāyasthas and Vaidyas, the lower strata of the society was then, as now, composed of professional classes of cultivators, fishermen, woodcutters, potters, barbers, carpenters, milkmen, *ojhās* (snake-charmers who also cured snake bites), *ghaṭakas* or match-makers and astrologers.<sup>3</sup> These classes, originally formed on an economic basis, seem to have assumed the nature of castes. A Musalman priestly class, the *mullās*, had by that time grown in the society. Their function was to preside over the religio-social ceremonies of the Musalmans, slaughter fowls and give amulets and they were, therefore, at least regarded as men conversant with religious scriptures and formalities.<sup>4</sup> Kavikaṅkan has given an exhaustive account of the numerous economic classes of the sixteenth century Bengal. It is highly probable that some of these classes, both Hindu and Muslim, existed in the Husain Shāhī period also, although the names and nomenclatures applied to them by the poet, might have been unknown in the earlier period. The various professional groups, mentioned by us, clearly indicate that Bengali society was growing to its full economic stature.

It is a general fashion to divide the people of a country into producing and consuming classes. But this classification seems unscientific, for the producers are also consumers and

1. *Op. cit.* p. 143.

2. *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, p. 197 ; see also Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* p. 4.

3. *Ibid.* pp. 4, 71-76, 152-55, 165-67 ; Kavikaṅkan : *op. cit.* 1, pp. 269-73.

4. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* p. 55 ; Kavikaṅkan : *op. cit.* 1, p. 260.

those whom one may call consumers may help the production of wealth at least indirectly. One may regard the high government officials of the period under study as belonging to a purely consuming class. But we should not forget that these officers produced an atmosphere congenial to the production of wealth, by maintaining peace and order in the country and running the administration efficiently. Brahmins, teachers and the local landlords were no doubt enjoying wealth within their respective jurisdiction ; but their indirect contribution to the production of wealth is not negligible, although it may be less significant than that of the direct producers. The rulers and governors directly helped the circulation of wealth by employing a good number of architects and masons to carry on public works and also by giving patronage to several poets and scholars. Even then there is hardly anything to minimize the position of the sultān and his nobles as consumers. The ruler with his personal servants, domestics and concubines, must have spent a large amount of money. His colourful *darbār*, the robes of honour he presented and the titles and distinctions he ceremoniously conferred on the nobles and dignitaries of the state, similarly involved huge expenditure. Although the materials, at our disposal, do not give a clear idea about the standard of life of the nobles, there is every reason to believe that their luxurious ways and living conditions used to drain a considerable portion of the wealth of the country.

Barbosa who has described the lives of the upper class and the lower class, is completely silent on the condition of the middle class people. This silence does not preclude the possibility of the existence of that class. Moreland has noticed "the comparative insignificance" of the middle class people in Akbar's India. He has, of course, confessed that this theory does not possibly apply to Bengal.<sup>1</sup> It seems that there was a sound middle class in our period. While the upper class was composed of the high officials and landlords, the lower class included

1. Moreland : *India At The Death Of Akbar*, pp. 26-27.

the professional groups like cultivators, weavers, and other minor economic grades of people. The landlords constituted landed aristocracy and as such were distinct from the high officials. The middle class was composed of merchants and traders who had accumulated wealth and of the Brahmins and teachers whose condition does not seem to have been miserable. This broad classification was undoubtedly based on the respective economic strength of the groups mentioned above.

## VII

It is very difficult to ascertain the economic condition of the general people living in Bengal in the period under consideration. Foreign travellers give us a rosy picture of the life of medieval Bengal. Thus the fourteenth-century Chinese traveller, Wang Ta-Yuan, enthusiastically remarks, "These people owe all their tranquillity and prosperity to themselves, for its source lies in their devotion to agriculture whereby a land originally covered with jungle has been reclaimed by their unremitting toil in tilling and planting. The seasons of Heaven have scattered the Wealth of the Earth over this kingdom, the riches and integrity of its people surpass, perhaps, those of Ch'en-chiang ( Palembang ) and equal those of Chao-wa ( Java )".<sup>1</sup> Another Chinese account contains the following lines: "Bengal is rich and civilised. To our ambassadors they presented gold basins, gold girdles, gold flagons, and gold bowls and to our vice-ambassador the same articles in silver. To our officials of the ministry of foreign affairs, they presented golden bells and long gowns of white hemp and silk. Our soldiers got silver coins. If they had not been rich, how could they do it in such an extravagant way?"<sup>2</sup> Again Barbosa tells us that life in the upper circle was marked by wealth and luxury. It is not safe to arrive at any definite conclusion on the basis of these foreign

1. *Viśva-bhārati Annals*, 1945, pt. 1, p. 99.

2. *Si Yang Ch'ao Kung Tien Lu*: compiled by Huang Sing Ts'ing in 1520 A.D.; *Viśva-bhārati Annals*, 1945, pt. 1, p. 127.

accounts which do not seem to be free from exaggerations. Moreover, the travellers came in contact with the upper class people and not probably with the poorer sections living in villages. All that can be inferred from the statements quoted above, is that the upper class people lived in affluence. "The respectable Moors" whose, life Barbosa despicts quite vividly,<sup>1</sup> and the local *majmu'adārs* who were allowed by the government to enjoy a great part of the revenue they collected, must have been prosperous. Thus there may be some truth in Firīshṭah's statement that the rich people used to display the golden vessels they possessed.

The condition of the lower stratum of population must have been different from that of those belonging to the upper rung of the social ladder. As stated in the *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*,<sup>2</sup> common people were very much concerned with the slight rise or fall in the price of paddy which could affect their lives adversely or otherwise. As a matter of fact, their purchasing power does not appear to have been high. Thus there is probably some justification in Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's statement that though commodities were quite cheap in Bengal, people were complaining about what they considered to be high prices.<sup>3</sup> We do not know how the government mitigated the miseries of famine which broke out from time to time. Jayānanda informs us of a famine that led to the migration of a large number of people,<sup>4</sup> though we are not told what measures the Muslim ruler took to avert the calamity. Although Bengal was a land of plenty, so far as the availability and cheapness of agricultural products were concerned,<sup>5</sup> the cultivators do not seem to have

1. *Op. cit.* II, pp. 147-48.

2. *Op. cit.* ādi, XIV, p. 105.

3. *Reḥla*, p. 234.

4. *Op. cit.* p. 11. Frequent references to famines that affected the life of Bengal in the period in question, are found in the *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, ādi, IV, p. 22; madhya, VIII, p. 176.

5. *Reḥla*, pp. 234-35; Wang Ta-Yuan's account quoted above. *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 101-102.

enjoyed an enviable position. The state demand which was, in some cases at least, half of their crops in addition to other governmental charges,<sup>1</sup> appears so high that it is quite likely to have caused hardship to them. The prevalence of the institution of slavery indicates the presence of poverty among certain sections of people. Barbosa informs us that the "Moorish merchants" used to "travel up country to buy Heathen boys from their parents"<sup>2</sup> who must have been poverty-stricken. Pictures of poverty obtain in Bengali literature of the time. Vallavāchārya, a Brahmin of Navadvīpa, was so poor that he could afford to give only five myrobalans to the bride on the occasion of his daughter's marriage, while Shṛīdhara, another poor Brahmin of the same locality, was asked by Chaitanya to earn his livelihood by worshipping lower class goddesses like Chāṇḍī and Manasā.<sup>3</sup> Again Kavikāṅkan devotes a considerable section of his poem to the description of the poverty-stricken condition of Fullarā throughout the course of the year.<sup>4</sup> These glimpses of the condition of common people, indicate a position of sharp contrast between the upper and the lower grades of the population. The effects of poverty must have been mitigated to a considerable extent by the very nature of the necessities of life which were quite limited.

1. *Supra*, p. 136.

2. *Op. cit.* II, p. 147.

3. *Chaitanaya-bhāgavat*, ādi, IX, p. 60 and X, p. 72.

4. *Op. cit.* I, pp. 199-202.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

THE religious life of the period had a number of distinct elements such as Islām, Vaiṣṇavism, Tantricism and the Manasā, Nāth and Dharma cults. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to understand the general nature of each of these religions. The essential features of some these religious systems, particularly those of the minor cults, must have remained unchanged in the periods preceding and succeeding the Husain Shāhi rule.

Islām in its simple and austere aspect, does not appear to have characterized the life of the people, although literary and epigraphic sources indicate that offering prayers regularly, keeping the Ramaḍān fast tenaciously, reading the Qur'ān together with other religious scriptures, paying the poor-rate and going on pilgrimage to Mecca, were quite common practices.<sup>1</sup> The vernacular literature of the time, depicts the *mullā* and the *qāḍī* as extremely

1. Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina is clearly mentioned in the Bābā Ṣāliḥ inscription of Sonārgaon, dated 911 A.H. 1505 A.D. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 283. For the mention of *salāt* (prayer) and *zakāt* (poor-rate), see another early sixteenth-century inscription, *I.H.Q.* 1950, p. 183. For the orthodox religious life of the Muslims, as depicted by the Hindu poets, see *Vipradās : op. cit.* pp. 67-68 and 143; *Kavikañkan-chandī*, I, pp. 259-60.

orthodox in their religious beliefs and ways of life. It seems that the contemporary sources have put emphasis on the ideals of a strict life to be led obviously in accordance with the rules of Sunnī Islām. But a careful study of the literature of the time shows that there prevailed a sort of folk Islām having hardly any connection with the dogmas of religion.

But the popular Islām does not seem to have been free from accretions of an amazing nature. The writers of the *Maṅgal* poems tell us that some of the influential Muslims used to worship the snake goddess, Manasā, out of fear for snake-bite.<sup>1</sup> It was probably a result of the Hindu influence on the Muslims. Nuṣrat Shāh constructed a building in order to preserve therein the *Qadam Rasūl* or the footprint of the Prophet. But veneration of the Prophet's footprint does not find support in orthodox Islām. Originating in Buddhism, this type of fetishism seems to have made its way into Hinduism, Christianity and Islām. So there are the footprints of the Buddha and Viṣṇu at Bodh Gayā and Gayā respectively and those of Christ and Muḥammad in the Middle Eastern countries. We have shown in the succeeding chapter how the Muslim mystics of the time had brought a wide variety of tantric and yogic ideas and customs to the fold of Islām. Saiyid Sulṭān used to believe in the union of the Lord with the *Ādyā-shakti* or primordial goddess, to be effected in the physical body<sup>2</sup>—a principle hardly compatible with the Islamic idea of monotheism. The idea of *Ādi-deva* or the primordial god and *Ādyā-shakti* or the primordial goddess, obtaining in most of the mystic cults of medieval Bengal, appears to be a modified version of the Sāmkhya conception of *Puruṣa* (the unchanging principle of pure consciousness) and *Prakṛti* (the primordial cosmic substance), who are regarded as the underlying principles of the cosmic evolution.<sup>3</sup>

1. It is narrated in these sources that two brothers named Ḥasan and Ḥusain worshipped Manasā; Vipradās: *op. cit.* pp. 84-86; Vijaya Gupta: *op. cit.* pp. 54-61.
2. *Infra.* ch. vi.
3. S. B. Das Gupta: *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 328 ff.

Saiyid Sulṭān has accepted the doctrine of the primordial male and the primordial female possibly under the influence of the mystic cults that flourished in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Even if we reject the popular story that Ḥusain Shāh was responsible for the introduction of the worship of Satyapīr,<sup>2</sup> it seems certain that the period under review witnessed the growth of the cult of Pīr. Bengali poets tell us that the orthodox Muslims regularly paid homage to the shrines of the Muslim saints.<sup>3</sup>

Islāmic mysticism, popularly known as Ṣūfī-ism, greatly influenced the society of medieval Bengal. Some of the Ṣūfī orders which entered Bengal in the course of several centuries, appear to have influenced the life of the people of the period under consideration. The Chishtīya Ṣūfī, Nūr Quṭb-i-‘Ālam, who died in the first half of the fifteenth century, was held in high esteem by the people. According to Salim, Ḥusain who used to pay respectful visits to his tomb at Pāṇḍuā, spent a large amount of money for the maintenance of a rest-house for those who used to

1. *Infra*, ch. vi.

2. ‘Ārif, possibly an eighteenth-century Bengali poet, says in his *Lālmoner Kechchhā* (the story of Lālmon), “Ḥusain Shāh took away the beautiful lady named Lālmon..... When his desires were fulfilled at the end of the night, he offered to Satyapīr confectionaries worth 1½ lac of rupees. Satyapīr, who was at Mecca, came to know this. With his blessings, Ḥusain became a Bādshāh in the town of Mogān ; ” quoted in the *S.P.P.* 1310 B.S. p. 147. It is probably on the basis of these historically unreliable materials that Dinesh Chandra Sen : (*History of Bengali Language and Literature*, p. 797) and following him, some other scholars, have gone to the extent of associating the name of Ḥusain Shāh with the introduction of the cult of Satyapīr in Bengal. Such a contention does not find corroboration in any contemporary or reliable sources. Numerous poems were written on this cult in the eighteenth century, although the cult itself may be of an earlier origin. The earliest poem on Satyapīr is the one composed by Shaikh Faizullah who seems to have lived in the sixteenth century A.D.

3. Vipradās : *Op. cit.* p. 67 ; *Kavikañkan-chaṇḍī*, 1, p. 261.



come there to see the tomb from time to time.<sup>1</sup> His son Nuṣrat built the tomb of Akhī Sirāj-ud-dīn at Sa'dullāhpūr.<sup>2</sup> The two Chishtīya *Ṣūfīs* who had some connection with the religious life of this period, are Shaiikh Ḥusām-ud-dīn Mānikpurī, the chief disciple of Nūr Quṭb-i-Ālam<sup>3</sup> and Rajī Ḥamīd Shāh, the disciple of Ḥusām-ud-dīn. They died in 1477 A.D. and 1495 A.D. respectively.<sup>4</sup> Quṭban, the associate of Husain Shāh Sharqī, who was residing at Kahlgāon, after his defeat by Sikandar Lūḍī,<sup>5</sup> wrote in 1503 A.D., a romantic poem called *Mrgāvati* which appears to be a symbolical work illustrating the union of the seeker with the Supreme Being.<sup>6</sup> He informs us that he was the disciple of Shaiikh Burhān,<sup>7</sup> who was, according to Muḥamad Ghauthī, a Shattāriya *Ṣūfī*.<sup>8</sup> The Madāriya sect, introduced in Bengal in the middle of the fifteenth century, seems to have continued to exist in the period in question. The *Shūnya-Purāṇa* incidentally refers to the Madāriya slogan, *dam Madār* (the breath of Madār).<sup>9</sup> Kavikaṅkan mentions<sup>10</sup> the wandering Qalandars of late sixteenth century. Maulānā Shāh Daulah (1519), who chose Bāghā, in Rajshahi, as a centre of his activities, became the founder of several generations of *Pirs* in that part of Bengal.<sup>11</sup> Two of the inscrip-

1. *Riyāḍ*, p. 135.
2. *Ibid.* p. 138.
3. *A'in*, III, p. 412.
4. Enamul Huq: *Vaṅge Svūfī Prabhāv*, pp. 123-24.
5. *Supra.* ch. II, p. 38.
6. *Infra.* ch. VII.
7. *Mrgāvati*: quoted by Prof. Askari in *J.B.R.S.* 1955, Dec., p. 456: Shaiikh Budhan Jaga Sānchā Pir-Nānun Lait Sudh Howe Savir. "Shaiikh Burhān is a true Pir in the world. If anybody utters his name, his body becomes pure."
8. *Gulzār-i-Abrār*, Ms. in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, fol. 98. See also 'Abdul Ḥuq's *Tadhkirah* cited in *Current Studies*, 1955, p. 23.
9. *Op. cit.* p. 234; see also M. Shahidullah's introduction to the same work, p. 37.
10. *Op. cit.* I, p. 261.
11. *Vaṅge Svūfī Prabhāv*, p. 143.

tions of Ḥusain Shāh dated 911 A.H/1505 A.D and 912 A.H/1512 A.D.<sup>1</sup> contain references to the saint, Shāikh Jalāl Majarrad bin Muḥammad Turkistānī of Koniā who was alive in an earlier period.<sup>2</sup> Another Ṣūfī, venerated by the people of this period, was Ismā'il Ghāzī who was executed at the order of Bārbak Shāh in 1474 A.D.<sup>3</sup> The Mandāran inscription of Ḥusain Shāh indicates that a gate was erected in his honour in 1494-95.<sup>4</sup> Shāikh Faiḍullah, the poet of the *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, who flourished probably in the second part of the sixteenth century, tells us that he wrote a poem called *Gāzī-vijaya*, recounting the achievements of Ismā'il Ghāzī, the *Pīr* of Kāntādūār.<sup>5</sup> All these go to show how the Muslim Ṣūfīs and saints were respected by the people of medieval Bengal. Some of these Ṣūfīs appear to have brought about a cultural synthesis by adapting yogic and tantric philosophy to Islamic mysticism.<sup>6</sup>

It seems that there was a considerable growth of Shī'ite influences in the period under review. It should be mentioned here that the materials at our disposal are not sufficient to establish this point beyond doubt. One of the inscriptions of Saif-ud-dīn Abū'l Muẓaffar Fīrūz Shāh (1487-1490) mentions the names of Muḥammad, Alī, Fatima, Iḥsan and Ḥusain to the exclusion of the first three Caliphs of Islām.<sup>7</sup> Thus the inscription seems to refer to the

1. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 293 and 1922, p. 413, pl. ix.
2. *Gulzār-i-Abrār*, fol. 41, also quoted in *J.A.S.P.* 1957, pp. 65 and 67, connects him with the first Muslim conquest of Sylhet which is said to have been effected in 703/1303. See Sylhet inscription of Ḥusain Shāh, *J.A.S.B.* 1922, pl. ix, p. 413.
3. Appendix C.
4. *J.A.S.B.* 1917, p. 134.
5. *Satyapīr* of Faiḍullah, quoted by Enamul Huq: *Muslim Vāṅglā Sāhitya*, p. 89. Pīr Muḥammad Shattārī wrote *Risālat-ush-Shuhadā* narrating the activities of Ismā'il in Bengal and Sitāramdas, a seventeenth-century Bengali poet, mentions his name with respect; appendix C.
6. Ch. vi, section II.
7. *J.A.S.B.* 1874, p. 300.

Shī'ite tradition of *Panġtan-i-Pāk*, or the Five Holy Personages, which means an auspicious invocation at the beginning of an undertaking. The five epithets appearing in another inscription assigned to the early sixteenth century A.D.,<sup>1</sup> seem to be an imitation of the number 5 connected with the Shī'ite tradition mentioned above. The five names are *yā Budduh*, *yā Fattaḥ* (Oh Opener), *yā Allāh* (Oh God), *yā Quddūs* (Oh Holy One) and *yā Subbuh* (Oh Praiseworthy One). The word *Budduh* is conspicuous by its absence in Arabic and Persian lexicons. After the twelfth century A.D., it appears in Persian manuscripts dealing with amulets. Douttee, in his *Magie et Religion*, says that the word is used in Magian philosophy, as cure against stomach pain and similar other diseases.<sup>3</sup> One explanation seems plausible here. Islām came in contact with Magianism in Persia where several obscure Shī'ite sects including the Kaisanias and Hāshimias rose under the influence of Mago-Zoroastrianism. 'Ubaydullāh al-Mahdī, the first Fatimid ruler and 'Abdullāh Ibn Maymūn, the central figure of the religio-political propaganda scheme of the Shī'ites, are said to have been Magian by descent. The Rāwandis founded by Mokanna in the eighth century, who defied the Muslim power in Khorāsān, belonged to an Indo-Magian sect.<sup>3</sup> Placed under these circumstances, medieval Islām was probably influenced by Magian ideas. It is also highly probable that the Magian term, *Budduh* gradually made its way into Islām through Shī'ism. Thus a process of Buddhistic accretion on Magianism is indicated. The Indo-Buddhistic term, *Buddha* meaning 'the knowing one' appears to have been absorbed in course of time in Islām as a mystic name of God. Hence its presence in Persian manuscripts in the thirteenth century when some sort of compromise must have been effected between Magianism and Shī'ism. If the term *Budduh* of the above mentioned inscription of Bengal

1. *I.H.Q.* 1950, pp. 173-83.

2. *Ibid.* p. 176. Blochmann considers the term *Budduh* to be a mystic name of God; *J.A.S.B.* 1871, p. 256. See also my review in *J.A.S.P.* vi, p. 281.

3. Amir Ali: *The Spirit of Islam*, pp. 325, 327, 330 and 343.

is of Magian origin, its presence may be regarded as an indication of Shī'ite influences in this country.

These epigraphic evidences seem to find indirect corroboration in literary sources. The names of the Muslim heroes who fought unsuccessfully against Manasā, were Ḥasan and Ḥusain, the revered Shī'ite Imāms and the place-name of the Muslims is significantly Ḥusainbāṭi.<sup>1</sup> Mukundarām, while describing the Muslim colony in West Bengal, does not speak of a masjid there, but of Ḥasanbāṭi as the place of Muslim worship.<sup>2</sup> The reason is not probably far to seek. Bengal had direct maritime connection with the Persian Gulf and Iraq, both areas of Shī'ah predominance. Barbosa, the Portuguese traveller, visiting Bengal towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, found a good number of Persian merchants in the city of 'Bengala'.<sup>3</sup> The process of the growth of Shī'ism in Bengal was accelerated in the seventeenth century by the increase of oceanic communication between this country and Persia and by the large scale immigration of the Persians into Bengal due to the socio-political insecurity they had been feeling under the decaying and tyrannical Ṣafavids.<sup>4</sup>

Ṣūfī-ism, with its highly esoteric principles and practices, appears to have influenced only a section of the Muslim population and Shī'ism as a religious institution was yet to come into being. Thus the average Muslim probably adhered to what may be called folk Islām.

## II

Chaitanya did not originate Vaiṣṇavism which constituted for many centuries before him, an important element in the religious life of Bengal. The Sena kings with their leanings

1. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 54-61 ; Vipradās : *op. cit.* pp. 63-86.

2. *Kavīkañkan-chaṇḍī*, I, p. 258.

3. *Op. cit.* II, p. 139.

4. *History of Bengal*, II, p. 224.

towards Vaiṣṇavism, had perhaps produced an atmosphere congenial to the development of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult popularized in the *Gīta-govinda* of Jayadeva,<sup>1</sup> which has been regarded by the followers of Chaitanya as one of the sources of their religious inspiration. The *Shrī-Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* of Chāṇḍīdās, his melodious *padāvalīs* and those of Vidyāpati of Mithilā,<sup>2</sup> betray the trend of popular Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal. In the period under review, Chaitanya gave it a reality which it did not hitherto possess.

Born in 1486 A.D. in a Brahmin family of Navadvīpa, Chaitanya appears to have received elementary education in Sanskrit schools. The death of his father in his infancy and the entire burden of the household falling upon his shoulders, the accidental death of his wife, Lakṣmī, during his absence on a sojourn in East Bengal and his subsequent marriage with a Brahmin girl named Viṣṇupriyā, are some of the incidents connected with his early life. The great change that came over his life is generally attributed to a trip to Gayā that he had undertaken at the age of nearly twenty-two with a view to performing the *shrāddha* ceremony of his father. It was at this celebrated place that Chaitanya was given the *Kṛṣṇa-mantra* by a spiritual ascetic named Īshvara Purī whose association combined with the sacred surroundings of Gayā, seems to have aroused in his mind strong religious feelings hitherto dormant in his nature. On his return from Purī, he started a new life saturated with love for Kṛṣṇa and characterized by emotional songs

1. Jayadeva was one of the court-poets of Lakṣmaṇa Sena in whose reign Bengal was attacked by Bakhtiyār Khaljī (early thirteenth century). Quite celebrated for its lyrical charm, rhetorical grandeur and pictorial beauty, the *Gīta-govinda* of Jayadeva which deals with the erotic Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legend, has appeared in India in several editions. It has been translated into English by Sir William Jones, *Collected Works*, London, 1807. Edwin Arnold has rendered it into English verses in the *The Indian Song of Songs*, London, 1875.
2. He flourished probably in the early fifteenth century; see Suku-mar Sen : *Vāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa*, 1, p. 80.

and dances and mystic trances which became striking features of his life from this time. He was joined very soon by Nityānanda, Advaita and others who considered him to be devotion personified. The musical worship called *kīrtana* was publicly performed, so much so that it was opposed by a group of conservative Brahmins of Navadvīpa. After his initiation into the monastic order, in 1510 A.D., by Keshava Bhārati of Kātwā, Chaitanya went on a religious journey covering many parts of southern and western India and including a short visit to Br̥ndāvana. His meeting with Rūpa, Sanātana and the king Pratāpa-rudra of Orissa, was of significant importance for the history and philosophy of Chaitanya-ism. He spent the remaining eighteen years of his life at Pūri, dancing and singing in a state of ecstatic emotion. He passed away in 1533 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

Although the name of Chaitanya has become closely associated with the history of Vaiṣṇavism, he does not appear to have worked out any theological or philosophical system for the sect, nor has he written any religious work excepting perhaps the *shikṣāṣṭaka* or eight teachings which may be translated as follows : "May the recital of the name of Shri-Kṛṣṇa be trium-

1. Materials for the life of Chaitanya are scattered in a number of Sanskrit and Bengali biographical works. Elsewhere, we have given a brief account of the Sanskrit biographies of Chaitanya such as *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* of Murāri Gupta, *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* of Kavikarnapūra and *Chaitanya-chandrodaya-nāṭaka* by the latter; *infra*, ch. vii, section iii(c). The Bengali poems dealing with the life of Chaitanya are *Chaitanya-bhāgavat* of Br̥ndāvanādās, *Chaitanya-maṅgala* of Lochanadās, *Chaitanya-maṅgala* of Jayānanda, *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj and *Kaḍachā* of Govindadās. We have used these works in this book and mentioned their dates and places of publications in the Bibliography. B. B. Majumdar has given a critical account of the materials for Chaitanya's life in *Shri-Chaitanya-chariter Upādān*. For the life of Chaitanya, see also, M. T. Kennedy : *The Chaitanya Movement*, pp. 13-51 ; S. K. De : *op. cit.* pp. 51-76 ; D. C. Sen : *Chaitanya and His Age*, pp. 99-265 etc.

phant, which clears the mirror of the mind, extinguishes the great forest-fire of existence, spreads the rays of the white lily of welfare, maintains the life of learning which is like nectar, swells the ocean of happiness, enables the tasting of full bliss at every step and bathes the whole soul. You created the different aspects of the name and you put all your powers into that ; there is no time for the regular remembrance of the same. Such is your mercy, O God ; but so very unfortunate am I that in this life no love for it grew in me. One should recite the name of Hari by considering oneself lower than the grass, more patient than the tree, devoid of any sense of prestige, but always ready to show honour where it is due. O son of Nanda, I, your servant, have fallen into the troublous waters of the ocean of life. So kindly consider me equal to the dust of your lotus-feet. When will my eyes be flowing with constant tears, my voice choked with overwhelming words and my body filled with delight at the time of reciting your name ? Not riches, not relations, not a beautiful woman, nor good poetic faculty do I desire, O God. Let my disinterested devotion flow towards you who are my God in all my lives. Due to my separation from Govinda, the moment has become an age, eyes have become like torrents of rain and the whole world has become empty. Let him embrace me or trample my poor self which is engaged in shampooing his feet or let him inflict great misery on my mind due to my not seeing him. Let that rogue do whatever he thinks. He and nobody else is the Lord of my heart".<sup>1</sup> Besides giving expression to the simple devotional faith of Chaitanya, characterized by a depth of feeling and a sense of Vaiṣṇavite humility and indicating the devotee's attitude of complete self-resignation to the will of the deity, these verses do not seem to contain any theological meaning. One may, of course, read into the last verse, the doctrine of the *rāgānuga* mode of devotion adopted by Chaitanya. Love for

1. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : *op. cit.* antya, xx, pp. 358-60 ; *Padyāvali* nos. 22, 31, 32, 71, 93, 94, 324 and 337 ; cf. Kennedy : *op. cit.* pp. 90-91.

Kṛṣṇa with an intense emotion, is thus the fundamental principle of the faith of Chaitanya.

The history of the post-Chaitanya Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal is characterized by two distinct religious traditions, one developing at Bṛndāvana and the other at Navadvīpa. The Bṛndāvana tradition was represented by the six Gosvāmins some of whom are said to have been instructed by Chaitanya to systematize the doctrines and dogmas of Vaiṣṇavism.<sup>1</sup> Their monumental works in Sanskrit embody the elaborate philosophy, theology and ethics of the Kṛṣṇa cult, with which the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal were acquainted not before the beginning of the seventeenth century. Their theology and *rasashāstra* being "a matter of later deliberate development,"<sup>2</sup> do not come under the purview of our discussion. The life of Chaitanya with its mystic trances, musical worship of the deity and mysterious happenings was the main concern of his direct and immediate followers at Navadvīpa, who have given expression to their simple devotional faith through a good number of biographical works without caring much for the exposition of the doctrinal aspect of Vaiṣṇavism or of the teachings of *Śrī-Chaitanya*. The religious ideas of Navadvīpa circles of Vaiṣṇavas are preserved in the works of Murāri Gupta, Kavikarṇapūra, Bṛndāvanadās, Lochanadās and Jayānanda who do not betray any knowledge of what was happening at Bṛndāvana at about the same period of time—a position indicating that they stood in a state of complete isolation from the Gosvāmins of Bṛndāvana.

Chaitanya who was a living reality to his Navadvīpa followers, was regarded as *Parama Tattva* or the Ultimate Reality and as such the object of direct worship. Murāri Gupta who describes at a considerable length, his *Mahāprakāsha* and *Mahābhīṣeka* or Great Manifestation and Consecration as the supreme object

1. For the later development of the sect at Bṛndāvana and the works of the Gosvāmins like Rūpa, Sanātana, Jīva, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa and Raghunāthadās, See S. K. De ; *op. cit.* chs. III-VI.

2. *Ibid.* p. 79.



of adoration,<sup>1</sup> pays due respect to Chaitanya, the four-armed Viṣṇu,<sup>2</sup> identifying him with the *Bhāgavat*<sup>3</sup> and considering him to be the incarnation in the *Kali yuga*.<sup>4</sup> Kavikarṇapūra depicts his two-armed, four-armed and six-armed forms and believes that he came to the world with a view to saving people from suffering and teaching devotional practices to Hari.<sup>5</sup> He makes a clear distinction between the emotional form of devotion or *rāgānuga bhakti* and the devotion governed by the scriptural injunctions or *baidhi bhakti*, preferring the former to the latter.<sup>6</sup> Both Murāri and Kavikarṇapūra maintain that one of the objects of his descent was to refute *Advaitavāda* or monism,<sup>7</sup> probably because it did not make room for the dualistic conception of *bhakti* which distinguished the devotee from the deity. Bṛndāvanadās accepts without question Chaitanya's divinity and his identity with Kṛṣṇa<sup>8</sup> rejecting the *Gaura-nāgara* doctrine developed by Lochanadās<sup>9</sup> and others who regard Chaitanya as the *nāgara* or beloved and his devotees as *nāgarīs* or women in love with Chaitanya. The supporters of this doctrine considered the life of Chaitanya at Navadvīpa as a counterpart of Kṛṣṇa's Bṛndāvana-līlā. Some of the contemporary *pada*-writers appear to have ascribed *Rādhā-bhāva* to Chaitanya considering him to be the incarnation of both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

We find a systematized theory of incarnation in the Vaiṣṇava literature of the time. Bṛndāvanadās gives a long list of

1. *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* : extracts in S. K. De : *op. cit.* p. 426.
2. *Ibid.* p. 426.
3. *Ibid.* p. 426.
4. *Ibid.* p. 29.
5. *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, vi, 122 and vii. 19. xvii. 7; *Chaitanya-chandrodaya* : extracts in S. K. De : *op. cit.* p. 175.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.* pp. 175 and 426.
8. *Op. cit.* ādi, i, p. 6, ii, pp. 10, 14, etc; madhya, ii, p. 133, iii, p. 142, etc.
9. *Chaitanya-maṅgala*, ādi pp. 3, 52, madhya, p. 7 and *padas* in the appendix, pp. 8, 9, 11, 12, etc.

*avatāras*: Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Parashurāma, Rāma, Haladhara, Buddha, Kalkī, Dhanvantarī, Hama, Nārada, Vyāsa, Kṛṣṇa and Chaitanya identified with the Bhāgavat, all of whom have been considered to be a manifestation of the same reality which, again, is said to have descended on the earth in the four ages of Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali in white, red, dark and yellow forms respectively.<sup>1</sup> The theory of Br̥ndāvanadās seems to have been influenced by the conception of incarnation found in the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* of Murāri Gupta and the *Gīta-govinda* of Jayadeva. According to Murāri, Shukla, Yajña, Pṛthu and Chaitanya are the *avatāras* in four ages respectively and the *kāryāvatāras* are Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Bhārgava, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalkī.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note here that the first ten *avatāras* of Br̥ndāvanadās' list appear exactly in the same order in the *dashāvatāra-stotra* (the hymn of praise to the ten *avatāras*) of the *Gīta-govinda*,<sup>3</sup> which has been accepted in a slightly modified form by Murāri Gupta. The Vaiṣṇava poets of the period under discussion appear to have accepted the conventional list of *avatāras* with a view to finding in it a place for Chaitanya.

In the *Gauragaṇoddeshadīpikā*, Kavikarṇapūra admits of a plurality of deities in the *Pañcha-tatta* doctrine<sup>4</sup> which established Chaitanya, Nityānanda, Advaita, Gadādhara and Śhrīvāsa as five objects of worship. A hierarchy of deities has been conceived of by the supporters of this doctrine, for they are willing to regard Chaitanya as *Mahāprabhu* and Nityānanda and Advaita as *Prabhus*. At about the time when Br̥ndāvanadās composed his *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, the Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīpa were, perhaps, divided into several groups, each associating itself closely with

1. *Chaitanya-bhāgavat* ādi, II, p. 15.

2. Extracts in S. K. De: *op. cit.*, p. 174.

3. *Gīta-govinda*: canto I, 5-14.

4. Kavikarṇapūra has attributed the origin of this doctrine to Svarūpa Dāmodara; B. B. Majumdar: *op. cit.* pp. 50 and 617.

one of the direct followers of Chaitanya such as Advaita, Nityānanda and Gadādhara.<sup>1</sup> The stray religious ideas that we come across in the writings of the Vaiṣṇavas of the sixteenth-century Navadvīpa, seem to indicate that the Navadvīpa tradition did not have for itself any organized system of philosophy.

Whatever might have been the exact nature of the Navadvīpa tradition, Chaitanya-ism had far-reaching influence on the society and culture of medieval Bengal. The emotional mode of worship emphasized by Chaitanya gave to Vaiṣṇavism an added interest and made it widely known not only in Bengal and Orissa, but also perhaps in some other parts of India. It produced a rich literature in Bengali and Sanskrit<sup>2</sup> which may be regarded as a storehouse of socio-religious information. Although Chaitanya did not abolish caste system,<sup>3</sup> he opened the door of his emotional faith to all people irrespective of caste or religion<sup>4</sup>—a catholic attitude that must have stood in sharp contrast with the conservative spirit of Brahminical orthodoxy, amounting to a significant social revolution in those days.

It is difficult to ascertain what factors contributed to the origin and growth of Chaitanya-ism and the consequent mental loosening of a significant section of Bengali people. It is necessary to understand the movement against its wide socio-

1. *Op. cit.*, madhya, III, pp. 146-47, x, pp. 192-93, XIII, p. 209; S. K. De : *op. cit.* p. 38, f.n.
2. For the Bengali and Sanskrit works dealing with Chaitanya-ism, see *supra*, p. 171, f.n. 1 and *infra*, ch. VII sect. III (c). The religio-philosophical literature produced by the Gosvāmins of Bṛndāvana, is the direct product of the Chaitanya movement.
3. Kennedy : *op. cit.* pp. 57 and 118-19.
4. Rūpa, Sanātana, and Nityānanda who were men of doubtful social status and Raghunāthadas and Murāri Gupta who belonged to the Kāyastha and Vaidya castes respectively, came in close contact with Chaitanya and rendered valuable services to Vaiṣṇavism; Kṛṣṇadas Kaviraj : *op. cit.*, antya, IV, pp. 282-88. It is said by this biographer that "caste and family do not count in the worship of Kṛṣṇa"; *Ibid.* p. 283.

logical background about which the literature of the time gives a good deal of information. The local cults of Manasā, Chāṇḍī and Dharma seem to have stood in direct opposition to the orthodox order of the Brahmins<sup>1</sup> who wanted to keep themselves aloof from the local influence by reviving the old, stringent socio-religious regulations as laid down in the ancient and medieval works on law and religion.<sup>2</sup> The self-centred and complacent attitude of the Brahmins must have checked the process of *rapprochement* between the upper grade represented by the Brahmins and the lower grades of the society. Dominated politically by the Muslims, the Hindus of Bengal were being gradually influenced by Muslim ideas and practices. Elsewhere we have suggested that Islām had sympathy and understanding for some of the local cults and for the mystic ideas underlying their philosophical systems. Converts to Islām under these circumstances must have grown in number. The discursive faculty of the Brahminical mind which found expression through the cultivation of a highly abstruse branch of knowledge called *Navya Nyāya*, seems to have produced an arid atmosphere of pure intellectualism to which the Vaiṣṇavas reacted vehemently.<sup>3</sup> This explains why the path of devotion was preferred to that of knowledge by Chaitanya and his followers.<sup>4</sup> Describing the socio-religious conditions of Navadvīpa on the eve of Chaitanya's birth, Bṛndāvanadās regrets that people were worshipping Shākta-tāntrik goddesses like Chāṇḍī, Manasā and Vāshulī and that even those who cared to read the religious scriptures like the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavat*, did not attach any importance to the worship of Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu.<sup>5</sup> The writers of the period believe that Chaitanya descended on the earth with a

1. *Infra*. ch. vi, section iv and ch. vii, section i (a).

2. *Infra*. ch. vii section iii (a) ; ch. ix, section ii.

3. For the reaction of the Vaiṣṇavas to logicians, see Bṛndāvanadās : *op. cit.* ādi, vi, p. 36.

4. *Ibid.* *op. cit.* ādi, vi, p. 36 and Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : *op. cit.* ādi, xvii, pp. 62-63.

5. Bṛndāvanadās : *op. cit.* ādi, ii, pp. 12-14.

view to fully establishing the cult of *bhakti*.<sup>1</sup> Considering the socio-religious conditions of Bengal on the eve of the growth of the Chaitanya movement, it may be maintained that it had originated probably in response to certain social demands, in order to bring about some sort of reconciliation of the different conflicting elements prevailing in the Hindu society of Bengal.

### III

Buddhism was no longer a dominant factor in the religious life of Bengal, although its influences could, perhaps, be traced in the mystic philosophy of the different major and minor cults of the time. Contemporary literature contains references to the Buddhists against whom the tirades of the followers of Chaitanya were probably directed. While Kavikarṇapūra deplores in the second act of his drama, *Chaitanya-chandrodaya*, the influences of the Buddhists, Tāntrikas, Māyāvādins, Jainas, Kāpālikas and Pāshupatas, Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj depicts the Buddhists as being defeated by Chaitanya and accepting the Vaiṣṇava mode of musical worship of Kṛṣṇa.<sup>2</sup> Brndāvanadās goes to the extent of making his master Nityānanda kick the Buddhists in a whimsical fit of anger.<sup>3</sup> All these indicate not only the hostility of the Vaiṣṇavas to the Buddhists, but also possibly the decadent condition of Buddhism in medieval Bengal. But Buddhism did not fail to have its impact on the cultural life of the Hindus of the period in question. While the Sanskrit writings of Rāyamukūṭa Bṛhaspati betray Buddhist influences,<sup>4</sup> the Buddha has been regarded as the ninth incarnation of Viṣṇu in standard Vaiṣṇava works of the time. The tendency towards religious

1. *Ibid.* ādi, II, pp. 14 and 15; Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj: *op. cit.* ādi, xvii, p. 52. For Kavikarṇapūra's views on this point, see *supra*, p. 174.

2. *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, madhya, ix, p. 125.

3. *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, ādi, vii, p. 54.

4. For a discussion on the point, see Haraprasad Shāstrī: "Rāyamukūṭa Bṛhaspati", *S P P.* 1338, B.S. pt. II, pp. 63-64.

syncretism noticed in the Vaiṣṇava writings was probably of a traditional nature, for the process was started as early as the time of Jayadeva.<sup>1</sup>

The Buddhist invocation appearing at the beginning of the doubtful Sābhār inscription ascribed to the end of the fourteenth century,<sup>2</sup> the copying of the Mahāyāna work *Bodhicharyāvatāra* at Benugrāma in 1436 A.D., by a *Sadbauddha-karaṇa-kāyastha-ṭhakkura*, named Shri-Amitābha,<sup>3</sup> and Chāṇḍidās' mention of the *trimūrti* Buddha incarnation,<sup>4</sup> probably reminiscent of the *triratna* or 'three jewels' of Buddhism, are some stray materials which do not help us in forming an accurate idea about the nature of Buddhism obtaining in Muslim Bengal. Passing through the stages of Mantrayāna, Vajrayāna, Kālachakrayāna and Sahajayāna,<sup>5</sup> Buddhism was gradually putting emphasis on *haṭhayogic* esoteric practices quite similar in nature to those obtaining in the Tantric philosophy which seems to have absorbed it in the course of several centuries, the process of assimilation being completed sometime after the beginning of the Muslim rule in Bengal. All that remained of Buddhism, must have been its Tantric form which we come across in the *Charyā* songs and which slowly transformed itself, by an inevitable historical process, into what came to be known as Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism,<sup>6</sup> in the post-Chaitanya period.

1. *Supra.* p. 175.

2. *Dacca Review*, 1920, pp. 113-14; D. C Sen : *Bṛhat Vāṅga*, 1, pp. 277-78.

3. Sukumar Sen: *Prāchīna Vāṅglā O Vāṅgālī*, pp. 30-31.

4. *Chāṇḍīdāśher Padāvalī*, ed. Nīratan Mukherjee, p. 18.

5. For the peculiar features of each of these stages of Buddhism, see S. B. Dasgupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 9 ff; *History of Bengal*, vol. 1, pp. 419-22; Nihar Ranjan Ray : *op. cit.* pp. 636-39.

6. The Sahajiyās put emphasis on the element of love, consider Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā to be the male and female aspects of the Absolute Reality and maintain that the highest spiritual realization is possible through the union of the human couple. S. B. Dasgupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 120 ff; see also Manindra

The *Chaitanya-bhāgavat* gives an account of the wanderings and religious activities of Nityānanda,<sup>1</sup> originally a member of the *Avadhūta* sect which was probably a branch of Tantric Buddhism. As the work under reference does not give us a clear picture about the esoteric practices and inner doctrines of the sect, it is difficult to ascertain how much it owed to Buddhism proper and how much to Tantricism and Shaivism. It seems fairly certain that the followers of this sect used to put emphasis on the nerve, *Avadhūti*, identified with the *Suṣumnā* of the Brahminical *Tantra*, which played an indispensable part in the *haṭhayogic* physical culture.<sup>2</sup> *Charyā* songs contain frequent references to the *Avadhūtikā* which was inseparably connected with the yogic discipline of the Buddhist *Sahajiyās*. The nerve *Avadhūti* has been described as that which puts easily an end to the evils of sufferings, as that which does away with the process of thought-construction of existence, which is without beginning, and as that radiant nature which destroys all sins.<sup>3</sup> The Buddhist *Sahajiyās* believed that the realization of the Absolute or *sahaja* consisted in the non-dual state of union of *Prajñā* and *Upāya*, the female and the male aspects of the Absolute, to be attained by controlling the right and the left nerves and making the female energy *Chandālī* or *Avadhūtikā* move upward towards the cerebrum region through the middle nerve *Avadhūti*.<sup>4</sup> The *Avadhūta* sect, named

Mohan Bose : *Post-Chaitanya Sahajiyā Cult*. The literature of the sect belongs to the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its doctrines seem to have been formulated long after the death of Chaitanya.

1. *Op. cit.* adi, viii, madhya, iii-v and xi-xii. How lightly Nityānanda regarded the caste system, is illustrated by the fact that he admitted lower class Hindus to the fold of Vaiṣṇavism; *ibid.* antya, v, pp. 381 and 383.
2. *Infra*, ch. vi. See also section v of this chapter.
3. *Hājār Vachharer Purāṇa Vāṅglā Bhāṣāya Bauddha Gāna O Dohā* (Charyācharya-binishchaya) ed. Haraprasad Shastri; commentaries on song no 2 and *dohā* no. 4, pp. 6 and 9.
4. S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, pp. 95-100.

probably after the middle nerve *Avadhūtikā* or after the female energy of the same name whose counterpart is called *Kuṇḍalinī Shakti* in the Hindu *Tantra*,<sup>1</sup> seems to have retained some of the distinctive features of the early Buddhist *Sahajiyā* philosophy which represented a Tantric form of Buddhism. It seems that the followers of this sect adopted the regressive method of physical culture which formed an integral part of almost all obscure cults of medieval Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV

The Dharma cult seems to have found a regular place in the religious life of the fifteenth and sixteenth century Bengal. Lurking traces of the cult are available in the *Manasā-vijaya* of Vipradās who has narrated how Gaṅgā turned all white by casting a glance at the white Dharma who had come to visit the house of Shiva during his absence. On his return, Shiva was immensely impressed by the all-white sight of Gaṅgā, then seated on a white bed, and he came to know what had happened during his absence. As a matter of fact, Shiva had been performing, for twelve years, hard penances, on the bank of the Vallukā, with a view to having a sight of Dharma. A good number of gods and goddesses including Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī and Indra came to pay respect to Gaṅgā who had been favoured by Dharma, the Ultimate Reality.<sup>3</sup> Though of a legendary nature, the story seems to emphasize the superiority of Dharma to the Hindu Triad, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Shiva—a feature quite prominent in the liturgical texts on the Dharma cult.<sup>4</sup> It is believed that Dharma put Shiva in charge of creation after having created the universe<sup>5</sup>—the idea being an echo of the cosmogonical con-

1. *Infra*, ch. vi, sec. II ; see also sec. v of this chapter.

2. *Infra*, ch. vi.

3. *Op. cit.* pp. 6-8.

4. *Shūnya-Purāṇa* : pp. 40-42, 168 and 179 ; *Dharma-pūjā-vidhāna*, p. 89, verse no. 140 and p. 215.

5. *Manasā-vijaya*, p. 7.



ception obtaining in the Dharmite mythology.<sup>1</sup> Following the traditional ideas of the Dharmites, Vipradās depicts Dharma as a white god, using a white umbrella, riding on the legendary owl Uluka and carrying a staff and a water-pot in the hands.<sup>2</sup> With a view to creating an indirect relationship of Manasā with Dharma, the poet says that Shiva was instructed by Dharma to find out Manasā in the lotus garden of Kālīdaha.<sup>3</sup>

Haraprasad Shāstrī considered the Dharma cult to be an offshoot of Buddhism,<sup>4</sup>—a theory that stands contradicted now a days.<sup>5</sup> Sukumar Sen who regards Dharma as “predominantly the War God of the fighting tribes like the Dom and others,” contends that the cult is a very primitive one, possibly of Austric origin, which has absorbed a variety of Aryan and non-Aryan elements including much of the abstractions of Varuṇa, the Vedic sun god, the Iranian sun god, the Puranic incarnation Kalkī, the tortoise incarnation and others. He further holds that the white goat sacrificed to Dharma, is a substitute for a young boy mentioned in the mythology and that the story connected with the account, in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, of the sacrifice of Shunahshepa, son of a Brahmin named Ajigarta, in place of Rohitāshva, son of king Harishchandra, is probably a

1. *Shūnya-Purāṇa*, pp. 40-42.
2. *Op. cit.* p. 6. For similar description of Dharma, see Rūpam : *Dharmamaṅgala*, pt. 1. pp. 2, 13, 18 etc.; *Shūnya-Purāṇa*, 8 ff; *Dharma-pūjā-vidhāna*, pp. 81, 87, etc.
3. *Manasā-vijaya*, p. 7. For Dharma's relationship with Manasā, see section vi of this chapter.
4. “Discovery of the Remnants of Buddhism in Bengal,” *P.A.S.B.* 1894, p. 135; “Buddhism in Bengal Since the Muhammadan Conquest” *J.A.S.B.* 1895, LXIV, pt. 1, no. 1, pp. 55-61 and “Śrīdharmamaṅgala : A distinct echo of Lalita-vistara,” *J.A.S.B. ibid*, pp. 65-68.
5. K. P. Banerjee : “Dharma Worship” *J.A.S.B.* 1942, VIII, pp. 131-32 and Sukumar Sen : “Is the Cult of Dharma a living relic of Buddhism in Bengal ?” *B. C. Law Volume*, pt. 1, pp. 670-72.

myth of Austric origin which had found a place in Brahminical literature in pre-Buddhist times.<sup>1</sup>

# V

Nāthism seems to have been one of the important religio-philosophical systems obtaining in Bengal. The *Gorakṣa-vijaya* contains a versified form of the popular story of Gorakṣanātha and Matsyendranātha that must have had wide circulation among the people of those days. Quṭban, the poet of the *Mṛgāvatī* has referred to the wanderings of the Gorakṣapanthī monks with such trappings as beads, long matted hair, revolving wheel, ring, rosary, staff, earthen cup, leg clogs, necklace, hide, wire, cow-dung ashes, trident, lyre and wallet.<sup>2</sup> Muḥsin Fānī, the writer of *Dabistān*, gives a very peculiar account of the manners, customs, and religious practices of the followers of Gorakṣanātha.<sup>3</sup> Literary evidences are available to show that the cult obtained not only in Bengal, but also in Bihār, northern and north-western India and Mārāṭhā country.<sup>4</sup>

The followers of this Shaiva-tāntrik cult used to consider the attainment of immortality to be the highest object of their life. They believed that liberation could be achieved in a ripe body by adopting certain methods of yogic-tantric discipline aimed at bringing about a state of union between Shiva, the principle of rest and Shakti, the principle of phenomenal manifestation. Accordingly, they developed a theory of nerves and

1. *Ibid.* pp. 669, 672-73; see introduction to the *Dharmamaṅgala* of Rūparāma, 2nd ed. pp. 3-18; see also Suniti Kumar Chatterjee : "Buddhist Survivals in Bengal", *B. C. Law Volume 1*, p. 78.
2. Extracts from the *Mṛgāvatī*, *op. cit.* p. 475.
3. *Dabistān-i-Maḍḥāhib*, pp. 141-45.
4. Kalyani Mallik : *Nātha Sampradāyer Itihāsa, Darshana O Sādhana-praṇālī*, pp. 11-24; see also *Nāthapantha* by the same writer, pp. 14-19.

six circles to be controlled and penetrated by the Nāthapanthi so that he might raise the dormant *Kuṇḍalinī Shakti* in the *Mūlādhāra-chakra* situated at the lowest part of the spinal chord, give it an upward motion and finally unite it with Shiva in the *Sahasrāra* in the head.<sup>1</sup> With this regressive process of physical and psychological culture was also connected the recital of the *soham mantra* ( or the hymn, 'He is I' ) and the production of the *anāhatanād* ( or the unrestricted sound ) which would come out of the *Anāhata-chakra* situated in the heart.<sup>2</sup> The idea of void obtaining in the Nāth and Dharma cults is probably of Austric origin—a suggestion strengthened by its presence in the religious beliefs of the Polynesian people who belong to Austric races. The conception of void obtaining in Buddhism is probably an indication of the influence of the Dharma cult on Tantric Buddhism.<sup>3</sup>

## VI

Of several other cults, those of Manasū and Chāṇḍī were quite prominent. We have elsewhere discussed the vernacular literature dealing with the legendary story of Manasū<sup>4</sup> and have referred to the ceremonials and superstitious beliefs connected with the worship of the snake goddess.<sup>5</sup> The cult appears to be of a composite nature, for it contains a number of Vedic, Puranic and non-Aryan elements.<sup>6</sup> We have already suggested

1. For a further elaboration of the yogic theory of nerves and six circles and the regressive process of yogic exercise, see *infra*, ch. vi, section II ; see S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 229 ff ; Kalyani Mallik : *Nāth Sampradāyer Itihāsa* etc. pp. 395-98, 433-35 etc. *Nāthapantha*, pp. 21-24, 27-29 etc.
2. Kalyani Mallik : *Nāth Sampradāyer Itihāsa*, pp. 459-60, 479 etc. *Nāthapantha*, p. 31.
3. Sukumar Sen's article in B. C. Law vol. I, pp. 669 and 671 ; Kalyani Mallik : *Nāth Sampradāyer Itihāsa*, pp. 340-61.
4. *Infra*, ch. vii, section I (a).
5. *Infra*, ch. ix.
6. Sukumar Sen : Introduction of Manasū-vijaya VI, xxxvī-xlII.

that the cult had some connection with the Dharma worship.<sup>1</sup> The suggestion finds support in the *Yamayamī-sūkta* of the *R̥gveda* which refers to the matrimonial relationship between Dharma and Ketakī (Manasā).<sup>2</sup>

The worship of the goddess Chaṇḍī is frequently mentioned in the *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*.<sup>3</sup> Towards the end of the sixteenth century, Mukandarāma wrote a long poem recounting the achievements of this goddess.<sup>4</sup> Going back to a slightly earlier period of Bengal history, we find that Danujamardana and Mahendra declared their faith in this cult by calling themselves *Shrī-Chaṇḍī-charaṇa-parāyaṇa* or 'devoted to the feet of Chaṇḍī'.<sup>5</sup>

Shaivism, which had been flourishing in Bengal from time immemorial, appears to have become quite decadent in the period under review. As indicated in the contemporary literature,<sup>6</sup> it was not only opposed but also possibly over-shadowed by the *Shākta-tāntrik* cults of Manasā and Chaṇḍī. The Pāshupatas who formed a branch of the Shaivite sect,<sup>7</sup> were probably looked down upon by the Vaiṣṇavas of the period in question.<sup>8</sup> Shaivism under these circumstances was gradually becoming mild and inactive and the Purāṇik Shiva converted into an average Bengali agriculturist.<sup>9</sup>

1. *Supra*. section iv of this chapter.

2. Sukumar Sen : Introduction to Rūpatāma's *Dharmamaṅgala*, p. 1.

3. *Op. cit.* adī, ch. II, p. 11 ; ch. IV, p. 24 ; madhya, ch. XIII, p. 210 ; *antya*, ch. IV, p. 362 and ch. V, p. 384.

4. *Infra*. ch. VII, section I (a).

5. The expression appears on several coins of these rulers, dated 1339 Shaka/1417 A.D. and 1340 Shaka/1418 A.D. ; see N. K. Bhattasali : *Coins and Chronology*, pp. 118-22 and pl. VIII.

6. *Infra*. ch. VII, 1 (a).

7. *History of Bengal*, vol. I, p. 405.

8. *Supra*. section III of the present chapter.

9. The *Shūnya-Purāṇa* contains a section on Shiva taking to cultivation (pp. 182-94), the theme being elaborated by Rāmeshvara

It seems that Brahminism was passing through a precarious state of existence. The Brahmins composed a number of works on *smṛti* or ritualistic law in order to enforce the rules of ceremonial purity of Brahminism so that it might not come under the influence of lower class and alien hieratic ideas. As the point has been discussed in some of the succeeding chapters of this work,<sup>1</sup> it needs hardly any further elaboration here.

There was a considerable amount of influence of Tantricism on the Hindu society of Bengal. Contemporary works are replete with references to Tantric ideas and practices. Vipradās has tried to depict Chappī as a corrupt woman<sup>2</sup> whom morally degraded people used to worship by offering meat and wine at her altar.<sup>3</sup> Br̥ṇḍāvanadās seems to have hinted at Tantric practices in the following lines: "They bring five girls at night after having recited the *mantras*. Various articles also come as concomitant thereof. These include eatables, scented garlands and different clothes. After taking food they cohabit with the girls variously".<sup>4</sup> The protective Brahminical culture had to absorb Tantric influences. Raghunandana has dealt at considerable length with the auspicious times of Tantric initiation. According to him, the months of Chaitra, Jaiṣṭha, Āṣāḍha, Bhādra and Pauṣa are inauspicious, and Vaiśākha, Śrāvaṇa, Āshvina, Kārttika, Mārgaśīrṣa. Māgha and Phālguna auspicious for initiation. He goes on to speak of the particular week days, the ascendancy of the different asterisms and the nature of the preceptor all of which had to be taken into consideration at the time of Tantric initiation.<sup>5</sup> Thus Tantric influences seem to have saturated Brahminical religious practices and beliefs.

Chakravartī at a later period of time when the process of the transformation of Shiva into an ordinary agriculturist was probably completed; see *Shivāyana*, pp. 68-75.

1. *Infra*. ch. vii, and ch. ix.

2. *Op. cit.* pp. 10-11.

3. *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, antya, v, p. 384.

4. *Ibid.* madhya, viii, p. 176.

5. Extracts from *Malamāsa-tattva* and *Dikṣā-tattva*, given by Bhabatosh

Some of the important Tantric works composed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, have elaborately discussed the Tantric rites, practices and philosophy. Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamavāgisha, who has given an exposition of Tantric doctrines in his celebrated work, *Tantrasāra*, is regarded as a contemporary of Chaitanya. The *Sarvollāsatāntra*,<sup>1</sup> another Tantric work, is said to have been written in the latter half of the fifteenth century. These together with other sixteenth-century works deal with a number of philosophical problems such as the nature of the soul, the supreme soul, the doctrine of *karma* or action, the spiritual relation between the devotee and the Absolute, the source of Supreme knowledge and others. These dogmas, embodying a high ideal, were influenced by the Vedānta and the ancient Tantras. On the question of the admissibility of wine in worship, the Tantric worshippers were divided into two rival groups called *Pashvāchāra* and *Kulāchāra*. "Besides eschewing wine in worship, the *Pashvacharins* generally adhered to the Vedic rites and rules of life modified through centuries of change and influence of the Tantra. The *Kulacharins*, on the other hand, developed a form of mystic culture in which the notorious five 'm's. (*pañcha makāra*)—wine, women, meat, fish and fried cereals,—featured most prominently." The preceptor, the initiation and the *mantra* or hymn were considered to be the first three essentials of Tantric worship. The external rites and rituals were meant to aim at a particular end, viz. unity with the Supreme Being after death. The devotees had to perform the mystic-yogic exercise of *ṣaṭchakrabheda*, which is said to have brought about his freedom from wordly bondages. The *Kulāchāra* Tantric mystic culture had its culmination in the inner worship connected with yogic physiology and the outer worship

Bhattacharya : "Raghunandana's Indebtedness to His Predecessors", *J.A.S.B.* 1953, vol. xix, no. 2, pp. 175-76.

1. Tapan Kumar Ray Choudhury : *Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir*, p. 237. The rest of the paragraph is summarized from this work, pp. 125-36.

associated with the *pañcha ma-kāra* in which sex played an important part. In the course of its development, the *Pashvā-chāra* seems to have been greatly influenced by the *Kulāchāra*. A careful study of the literature of the time shows that the relation between the Vaiṣṇavas and the Tantrics was quite unfriendly.

We have given above an idea about the general nature of the different religious systems. The constituent elements of these systems seem very often linked with one another and are thus indistinguishable. This is suggestive of a long-drawn process of contact among these religions, although they have also points of conflict.

## CHAPTER VI

### *ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS*

WE have already noticed that certain socio-religious forces operated in the life of Bengal under the Ḥusain Shāhī rule. As a matter of fact, this period witnessed an important stage in the process of the gradual evolution of Bengali society. As Islām was an important factor in the social life of the country, it is necessary to ascertain its relation with some of the local systems discussed in the preceding chapter.

Throughout the pre-Mughal period, there seems to have been an undefined conflict between Islām and Brahminism. With the decline of Buddhism and its consequent degeneration into Tantricism, the field was open to either Islam or Brahminism to assert itself. In the contest, however, Islām had a natural advantage. Besides the political advantage enjoyed by Islām, its liberalism as against Brahminical caste system, had a natural social appeal to the Bengalis who were coming to the fold of Islām with the expectation of certain political and economic advantages. It has been clearly stated by Barbosa that the Hindus were regularly embracing



Islām in order to receive favour from the ruling class.<sup>1</sup> Thus Islām seems to have held out before the mass of the population, not only the proverbial ideal of socio-religious equality, but also a bright prospect of immediate material gain. Conversion to Islām under these circumstances must have been quite inevitable. The social appeal of Islām must have been greatly minimized when Vaiṣṇavism grew in Bengal, and took the sting out of Brahminism and this saved the country for Hinduism. Thus Islām was one of the most powerful rival forces which Brahminism confronted. In fact, relation between Brahminism and Islām seems to have been one of contact and conflict ending in a temporary compromise in the Husain Shāhī period.

In the pre-Muslim period, the Brahmins had enjoyed a monopoly of social and political suremacy to which the foundation of Muslim rule gave a rude shock. They were no longer the political masters of the country. Their social importance was naturally reduced to a great extent. It was at this time that several anti-Brahminic forces were at work in Bengal. We have elsewhere pointed out that the local cults of Manasā, Chāṇḍī and Dharma appear to have opposed Brahminism to a great extent. These coupled with the advent of Islām created a peculiar situation to which the Brahmins appear to have reacted by trying to revive their lost glory. This Brahminical attitude is exemplified by the foundation of the Navadvīpa school of *Nyāya*, the composition of a number of *Smṛti* texts by Raghunandana and his contemporaries and the general revival of classical culture embodied in the Sanskrit works composed in the Husain Shāhī period and the period immediately following it. The attitude of the Brahminical section of population to the Muslim ruling class, seems to have been far from friendly. The Hindu political power had gone down with the Senas; attempts at its revival in the fifteenth century through the short-lived dynasty established by Rājā Gaṇesha, had also failed completely. The rise of Rājā Gaṇesha to power does

1. *Op. cit.* II, p. 148.

not seem to be an accidental political phenomenon in the history of Bengal isolated from its social background. It may be regarded as an outburst of a force that had been working since the foundation of Muslim rule in this country. It has been stated in the *kulaji* literature that the Brahmins of Varendra contributed a great deal to the success of Rājā Gaṇeśha.<sup>1</sup> Although we do not have any direct support for this statement, it cannot be summarily rejected. The period of Bengal's history occupied by Rājā Gaṇeśha and his successors, is characterized by a sudden revival of Brahminical culture.<sup>2</sup> Completely bereft of political power, the Brahmins must have felt bitter towards the later pre-Mughal Muslim rulers. Br̥ndāvanadās informs us that the people of Navadvīpa used to believe that the throne of Gauḍ would be occupied by the Brahmins—an idea also echoed in the *Chaitanya-maṅgal* of Jayānanda.<sup>3</sup> Rationally interpreted, it means that the Brahmins were not in a position to reconcile themselves to the Muslim rule. To such a group of people, the Muslim rulers could hardly be friendly. This seems

1. Nagendra Nath Basu : *Vaṅger Jātiya Itihāsa*, vol. I, pt. I, Brāhmaṇa-kāṇḍa, p. 194 and vol. III, *Pirāli Brāhmaṇ Vivaraṇa*, pp. 64-65.
2. Bṛhaspati Mishra who flourished in the court of Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh, received several honorary titles from the sultān, such as *kavichakravartī*, *rāja-paṇḍita*, *paṇḍita-sarababhauma*, *kavi-paṇḍita-chuḍāmaṇi*, *mahāchārya* and *rāyamukuta*; Sukumar Sen : *Madhya Yuger Vāṅglā O Vāṅgalī*, p. 10. For the works composed by this *kulīn* Brahmin, see *infra*. ch. VII. Bṛhaspati mentions in some of his works, the names of Rājā Gaṇeśha and his converted son, Jalāl-ud-dīn. In fact, the progress in Brahminical culture, which this period seems to have attained, would not have been possible, had it not been patronized by the rulers. Bṛhaspati held an important position in Jalāl-ud-dīn's court. His sons and other Brahmins seem to have controlled the state affairs and enjoyed various advantages from the rulers; see the *Smṛtiratna-hāra*, quoted by R. C. Hazra : *I.H.Q.* 1941, p. 447; see also quotations from *Pada Chandrikā*, *ibid.* p. 444.
3. *Supra*. ch. II, pp. 65-66.

to explain the conflict between the Brahmins and the Muslim ruler, quite elaborately depicted by Jayānanda. The persecution of the Brahmins at Navadvīpa by the Muslim sultān narrated by the poet, is an indication of the ruler's attitude to the Brahmins. It is true that several Brahmins were serving under Husain Shāh and his successors. Rūpa, Sanātana, Jagāi and Mādhāi are instances in point. This compromise of Brahminism with the Muslim ruling class was quite superficial, for the spirit of reaction was working from beneath the surface of the society. While meeting Shri-Chaitanya, Rūpa and Sanātana told him that they had lost their mental purity because of their association with the Muslim ruler with whom slaughtering cows and hating Brahmins were quite usual.<sup>1</sup> The Muslim ruling class needed the service of the Brahmins to conduct the administrative machinery and the Brahmins also came in contact with it with a view to earning livelihood. Thus the contact between the two groups, forced as it was by sheer necessity, was not the result of mutual understanding. In the field of administration, however, the Brahmins did not enjoy absolute monopoly, for a good number of Kāyasthas was appointed by the Muslim sultāns. Most of the vernacular poets seem to have come from the Kāyastha stock. Vijaya Gupta, Yashorāj Khān, Shrikara Nandi and Kavindra Parameshvara, were all Kāyasthas. In helping the growth of Bengali literature, the Muslim sultāns helped the Kāyastha class indirectly. It is almost fairly established that the Kāyasthas constituted the landed aristocracy of the country under the Husain Shāhi rulers. We have shown that Lashkar Rāmchandra Khān and Hirāṇya Majumdār had lucrative estates in south-west Bengal. Abū'l Faḍl, writing about the end of the sixteenth century, says that many of the *zamindārs* flourishing in the different *sarkārs* of Bengal, were Kāyasthas.<sup>2</sup> The Muslim rulers had probably direct support behind the growth of this Kāyastha landlord class. Whether they had supported the

1. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : *op. cit.* madhya, i, p. 76.

2. *Ā'in*, ii, pp. 143 and 145.

Kāyastha poets and landlords with the object of counteracting Brahminical influence in Bengal, is not clearly known ; but the growth of the Kāyastha intelligentsia and landlords, must have minimized Brahminical influence in the country.

The ruling class does not seem to have had any sympathy, whatsoever, for the Brahminical culture. Most of the Sanskrit poets and litterateurs, discussed in the succeeding chapter, did not have any connection with the Husain Shāhī court. The Sanskrit works written in and around Navadvīpa, do not have any genuine reason to mention the names of the rulers of Gauḍ, although Bengali works are replete with references to the Muslim sultāns. This is suggestive of the fact that Sanskrit literature did not receive any patronage from the Muslim rulers of the time.<sup>1</sup> Sanskrit was thus being pushed to the background, and Bengali received the recognition of the ruling class. Mahuan, the Chinese traveller mentions that Bengali and Persian were in use in the fifteenth-century Bengal.<sup>2</sup> He does not say anything about Sanskrit probably because it had no general acceptance. From whatever evidences can be gathered from the history of Bengali literature, it may be reasonably inferred that the Husain Shāhī rulers were helping the people's culture in crystallizing itself, by giving patronage to Bengali literature. The growth and development of the culture of the larger non-Brahminical section of the people must have checked the influence of Brahminical culture. Again Husain Shāh is known to have been tolerant to the growing Vaiṣṇavism.<sup>3</sup> This seems to suggest that the sultān wanted to check the progress of the orthodox Brahminical culture by tacitly supporting the liberal Vaiṣṇavism of Shri-Chaitanya. As a matter of fact, contemporary or almost contemporary works clearly state that the Brahmins of Navadvīpa were opposed to the Chaitanya movement,

1. This point has been discussed in chapter vii of this work.

2. *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 530 ; *Vishva-bhārati Annals*, 1945, vol. i, p. 117.

3. *Supra*, ch. ii, p. 67.

at least, in the beginning.<sup>1</sup> Husain Shāh's tacit recognition of Chaitanya-ism is thus quite significant.

Now that the Muslim rule had come to stay, the Brahmins could hardly expect anything tangible in the field of politics. All that they could do was to put emphasis on their intellectual superiority by resorting to cultural pursuits. This seems to explain why the life of contemporary Navadvīpa was characterized by intense intellectual activities. Barren and abstruse branches of knowledge like logic, grammar and *Smṛti* could now easily attract their attention. There was probably a regular process of the filtration of Islamic ideas and practices to the Brahminical society. Jayānanda has deplored Islamic influences on the Brahmins of the time. According to this poet, the Brahmins used to grow beard, put on socks, carry sticks, handle guns and recite the *Mathnawī* after the Muslim fashion.<sup>2</sup> They must have tried to stop the process of this filtration. They could attain this end by tightening up their own orthodox, socio-legal system. Raghunandana seems to have written his works in response to this social demand of the Brahmins. It appears to have had the result of separating the Brahminical section, not only from the Muslims, but also from all other lower class groups of Hindu population. Thus Brahminism wanted to lead a self-centered existence within the walls of the ancient *Dharma Shāstra* which it had raised around itself. Within its own limitations, however, it carried on intellectual pursuits and the centre of this Brahminical, orthodox culture was Navadvīpa which was linked up with the Aryan culture of Bihār and North India, by the river Ganges. It was at this place that Raghunātha Shīromaṇi founded the school of *Navya Nyāya* and Raghunandana composed his famous works. It was the city of Navadvīpa that witnessed the renaissance of Hindu culture through the resurgent Vaiṣṇavism of Śrī-Chaitanya. Southern and eastern parts of Bengal seem to

1. *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, ādi, xiv, p. 107.

2. *Op. cit.* p. 139.

have been comparatively free from the impact of this culture. This explains why the local cults of Manasā and Nātha could reign supreme in these regions. The followers of these two cults are found even to-day in South and East Bengal. Although Brahmins might have immigrated into this part from time to time, their influence must have been quite limited due to the popularity of the local cults.

But the Brahmins could hardly maintain their isolated existence for long, for contact with the Muslims and lower class Hindus was unavoidable for them. They had ultimately to reconcile their social order to this situation. It appears that the process of this reconciliation has been hinted at in the *kulaji* literature the genuineness of which is very often doubted.<sup>1</sup> According to the same source, the Kulinism of the

1. Nagendra Nath Basu is probably the first writer to make an exhaustive use of materials from *kulaji* literature in reconstructing the social history of medieval Bengal. His monumental work called *Vaṅger Jātiya Itihāsa* written in several volumes, has preserved the contents of various *kulaji* texts which are neither readily available nor easily accessible. This work has certain glaring defects, for the author's account of the origin and development of the castes and sects in the medieval Hindu society is not systematic, nor does he have any scientific approach to the sociological problems. Several scholars of Bengal have doubted the historical authenticity of *kulaji* works without giving any reason in support of their view-point. R. C. Majumdar who has discussed the problem at considerable length, maintains that the *kulaji* works in general, are historically unreliable. The defects of this literature, as mentioned by him, may be summarized here: (a) the historically unsound story of Ādiśūra who is said to have brought five Brahmins from Kanauj, is the pivot around which the whole Kulaji literature revolves; (b) most of the *kulaji* works including the *Goṣṭhikathā* of Nulo Pañchanana, the *Kularāma* of Vāchaspati Mishra, the *Kulapradīpa* of Dhanañjaya, the *Melaparyāyagaṇanā*, the *Vārendra Kulapañji*, the *Kulārṇava*, the *Kārikā* of Edu Mishra, the *Nirdosa-Kulapañjikā* and the

Brahmins of Bengal was being frequently injured as a result of their association with the Muslims who had become the political master of the country. This led to serious complications in the Brahminical society. Those who had any touch with the Muslims, were being regarded as fallen and low in their own community. They were thus face to face with a critical situation. A social organization called *Jātimālā kāchhāri*, was established under the presidency of a Brahmin called Datta Khāṣ who was probably one of the chief officers of Nāṣir-ud-dīn Mahmud Shāh (death in 1459 A.D.). He organized what was called the fifty-seventh *ṣamīkaraṇa* or social conference presumably to solve the problems of the *kulīn* Brahmins.

*Kārikā* of Hari Mishra being comparatively modern, cannot give us genuine information about the ancient Hindu society and (c) there have been deliberate interpolation, alteration and omission in the *kulaji* text. For the views of R. C. Majumdar on *kulaji* literature, see *History of Bengal*, I, pp. 623-34, appendix I; *Bhāratvarsa*, 1346 B.S. *Kārttik-Phālguna* issues. Most of the *kulaji* works were written in the Muslim period. That the *Mahāvāṇi-shāvali* was composed in 1407 Shaka=1485/86 A.D. is known from the colophon found in the same work; see the *Mahāvāṇi-shāvali*, quoted by N. N. Basu: *Vaṅger Jātiya Itihāsa*, Brāhmaṇa Kāṇḍa, vol. I, pt. I, p. 202. The *Goṣṭhikathā* of Nulo Pañchānana and the *Kularāma* of Vāchaspati Mishra, appear to have been written in the sixteenth or seventeenth century A.D. These together with other *kulaji* works mentioned above, must have given a picture of the Hindu society of the time. The details given by this literature, may or may not correspond to the actual state of things existing in the society; but it seems to bring home to us the various tendencies of the age in which it was produced. R. C. Majumdar and N. R. Ray, who consider *Kulaji* literature to be unreliable, do not fail to mention that it must have reflected the spirit of the time in which it was brought into being; see *History of Bengal*, I, pp. 632 and 633 and *Vaṅgālir Itihāsa*, pp. 263 and 265. The *kulaji* works cited in this section, clearly show that there was the impact of Islām on the *kulīn* Brahmins who had reacted to such a process by reorganizing their own social system.

At a subsequent date, however, Udayanāchārya Bhāduḍī classified the Varendra Brahmins into several *paṭis* or groups. In 1480/81 A.D. Devīvara introduced what is called *mela* system. He is said to have divided the Rāḍhīya Brahmins into 36 *melas* the names of which are Vallavī, Surāi, Chāṭṭarāghavī, Bhairavaghaṭakī, Mādhāi, Chāndāi, Vijaya-paṇḍitī, Shatānanda-khāni, Mālādharkhāni, Kāṅkusthi, Chandrāpati, Vidyādhari, Paramānandamishrī, Chayī, Phuliā, Khaḍadaha, Dehaṭā, Vāṅgāla, Bali, Naḍiyā, Paṇḍitaratnī, Āchamvitā, Āchāryashekhari, Chāyī, Parihāla, Shuṅgasarvānandī, Pramodinī, Harimajumdārī, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The *mela* system of Devīvara seems to have added a new chapter to the history of Bengali Kulinism. The Brahmins who had fallen victim to various *doṣas* or defects, could now regain their social status. If this information is correct, it must be said that the role of Devīvara in the history of evolution of the Brahminical society, was quite significant. Devīvara was a progressive social reformer in those days of caste rigidity. Realizing the new forces that were at work, he wanted to get the *kulīn* society adjusted to the changing circumstances, with a view to preserving the integrity of the Brahminical section of population. This was probably intended to save Kulinism from an impending danger.

The history of the different *melas* mentioned above, clearly shows that most of them were created as a result of *yavana-doṣa* touching the Brahmins. Bhairavaghaṭakī, Dehaṭā and Harimajumdārī *melas* are instances in point.<sup>2</sup> The Pīrālī Brahmins and Sherkhāni and Shrimantakhāni *melas* are said to have belonged to the same category.<sup>3</sup> The Brahmins who were classified under these groups, were considered to have lost their social position because of their contact with the Muslims.

1. *Vaṅger Jātīya Itihāsa: Brāhmaṇa-Kāṇḍa*, vol. I, pt. I, pp. 192-202.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 205 and 210.

3. For the history of these *melas*, see N. N. Basu: *op. cit.* vol. I, pt. I, p. 260, vol. III, *Pīrālī Brāhmaṇa Vivaraṇa*, pp. 152-160.



This meant a serious threat to the security of Kulinism. Besides *yavana-dosa*, there were other defects which could touch a *kulīn* Brahmin. These were being childless, going to brothel, marrying within one's *svajana* or community, marrying wicked or deformed girls, killing Brahmins, committing adultery or fornication etc.<sup>1</sup> Devīvara who had found the Kulinism of the Brahmins significantly injured by its association with various *doṣas* and the whole social structure standing on the verge of destruction, reorganized it in order to preserve its integrity. Nulo Pañchānana who did not like the liberal views of Devīvara and Shri-Chaitanya,<sup>2</sup> tried to re-establish the old social order in order to retain its orthodox pattern. Thus there seems to have been a conflict between orthodoxy and liberalism in the society. Even if we doubt the accuracy of the details of *kulaji* literature, we can hardly ignore the general social trends which it reveals. The process of the contact, conflict and compromise of Brahminism with local and alien forces which we have noticed,<sup>3</sup> is reflected in *kulaji* works. Further, the political and religious impact of Islām on the life of Bengal seems to have created a social unrest among the Brahmins who reacted to such a situation by trying to reorganize their own society from within.

## II

Though there are clear indications of a socio-political conflict between Islām and Brahminism, the mystic aspect of Islamic religion represented by Ṣūfī-ism, seems to have got itself adjusted to the peculiar nature of the indigenous culture. The fifteenth-century poem *Adya Parichaya* by Shaikḥ Zāhid and almost all the works of Saiyid Sulṭān, a sixteenth-century Bengali poet,<sup>4</sup> give expression to this syncretic tendency. The

1. N. N. Basu : *op. cit.* vol. I, pt. I, p. 204.

2. *Ibid.* p. 270.

3. See the relevant sections of ch. vii.

4. E. Huq : *Muslim Vaṅglā Sāhitya*, pp. 144-45.

catholic influence of Ṣūfī-ism is noticed in the works like *Jñāna-pradīpa* and *Jñāna-chauṭīshā*, characterized by an interesting synthesis of Islamic mysticism and Indian yoga philosophy.

The cosmological theories obtaining in Muslim Bengali literature, contain a considerable variety of heterogeneous elements which may be traced back to earlier, religio-philosophical systems, both indigenous and alien. The cosmogony of the *Gorakṣa-vijaya*<sup>1</sup> which does not differ essentially from that of the *Shūnya-Purāṇa*, represents the whole creation as proceeding from the union of the male and the female cosmic principles. But the ideas about creation found in the *Ādya Parichaya* of Shaiḳh Zāhid, betray certain characteristic features which deserve careful consideration. The poet says :<sup>2</sup> In the beginning there was nothing—neither water nor earth ; nor did the universe manifest itself in the sphere of the infinite vacuum. There was neither the world, nor the heaven, nor the sky, nor the sun, nor the moon. Neither were stars, nor clouds, nor mountains, nor rivers, nor oceans, nor jungles. There was an all-pervading darkness. And there existed God who felt depressed in the state of His absolute loneliness and thought of bringing into being creatures with a view to putting an end to the great vacuity and manifesting Himself in diverse forms. He created from His love or passion (*rati*) an image of His own self and placed it on the vast ocean. As He talked to His friend who was born of His *huṅkāra* or yawning, His mind became full of joy. Then came out the primordial water from His joy, air from His speech and fire from His anger. He took dust from the body of His friend and put it on the ocean so that the earth started expanding itself on the waves. Four elements of nature ( obviously earth, water, fire and air) came into existence. From God's *omkāra*, came out all that was terrible. God created also

1. *Op. cit.* pp. 123-26.

2. What follows is a free translation of the section on cosmology in Shaiḳh Zāhid's poem ; edited V. R. S. MS. in the possession of E. Huq ; cf. appendix E for the text.

the living Triad and placed them in charge of different categories of work. Gods and demons whom He had brought into being, engaged themselves in fierce fighting. Ferocious animals and demons continued to exist, but forgot the Creator. God destroyed the *deos* so that there was no one in the world. Now He made up His mind to create man with the definite object of making him rule over the creation.....

The above cosmogony resembles in some respects, the theory of creation detailed in the *Shūnya-Purāṇa*.<sup>1</sup> Both accounts start with the description of the Primordial Nihil and refers to the creation of the Triad. We find in the *Shūnya-Purāṇa* that the Lord created Nirañjana who brought into being, in succession, the bird Ulluka, the swan, the tortoise and the cosmic serpent Vāsuki. He created earth by putting the dusty substance of His nail on Vāsuki's head. But according to the Muslim account cited above, God made earth out of the dust of His friend's body. While the Dharmite text depicts Vāsuki as giving instructions to Nirañjana about creation, the Muslim poem shows that God's conversation with His friend led to His eagerness to create. Thus the general outline of *Shāikh Zāhid's* theory of creation bearing striking resemblance to the cosmological conceptions of the Nāthists and Dharmites, indicates that the poet has been considerably influenced by their religious beliefs with which he has combined several *Ṣūfī* ideas. The forms of cosmology that we notice in the Nātha and Dharmite literature of medieval Bengal, dominated the whole of Asia. Thus we have, in South-East Asia, the traditional cosmological ideas of the Polynesians<sup>2</sup> who are of Austric origin and the Ahom cosmogony<sup>3</sup> giving us the beliefs of a pagan people

1. *Shūnya-Purāṇa* : *Sṛṣṭi-pattana*, pp. 1-42.

2. Sukumar Sen : Int. to Rūparāma's *Dharma-maṅgala*, p. 3.

3. G. A. Grierson : "An Ahom Cosmogony, with a Translation and a Vocabulary of the Ahom Language." *J.R.A.S.* 1904, p. 181 ff. Phātūw-chūng, Khun-thiw-kham, the cosmic crab and the cosmic serpent of the Ahom cosmology, *ibid.* pp. 198 ff., are the coun-

who belonged to the Tai branch of the Indo-Chinese. West Asia is represented by the Babylonian *Poem of the Creation*<sup>1</sup> found in a text of the seventh century B.C., but perhaps coming down from "very much older texts" of about 2500 B.C. The *Nāsadīya-sūkta* of the *R̥gveda*<sup>2</sup> gives what may be called the Indian counterpart of the Babylonian Poem. The Aryans appear to have adopted the cosmological beliefs from the non-Aryan (perhaps Austric) people,<sup>3</sup> for these ideas, as already noticed, must have prevailed among the earlier primitive inhabitants of India and South-East Asia.

Broadly speaking, Shaikh Zāhid's cosmology is, at least apparently, an admixture of Jewish-Islamic and Austro-Indian ideas.<sup>4</sup> Theories of creations obtaining in Greco-Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, Chinese and South-East Asian literatures are theologonical in the sense that they are dominated by the idea of the creation of gods, in which man, though incidentally referred to, does not significantly count. Coming down to the times of the Hebrew scriptures, we notice two important changes in cosmology. God is no longer the god of a particular tribal society, but a universal God quite capable of originating and protecting entire mankind. Secondly, emphasis has been put on the creation of man, although animal and plant kingdoms and natural elements are included within the

terparts of Lord Nirañjana, the tortoise and Vāsuki of the *Sṛstipattana* of the *Shūnya-Purāṇa*.

1. R. G. Collingwood : *The Idea of History*, pp. 15-16.
2. Quoted by S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 324.
3. Sukumar Sen : Int. to Rūparāma's *Dharma-maṅgala*, p. 3 and Int. to *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, ed. Panchanana Mandala.
4. A similar syncretic tendency is noticed in the cosmological theories of Kabir (cited by Tara Chand : *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, pp. 155-57) and Malik Muḥammad Jaisi who gives Muḥammad an important place in the scheme of creation, *Padmāvatī* : tran. by Shirreff, p. 1 ff.

scheme of creation.<sup>1</sup> These two features have been shared by Islām. The monotheistic God of Islām, like the Jewish one, is all-powerful and universal. Although the Qur'ān does not have a separate Book of Genesis, it has referred several times to the creation of man out of clay into whom the Divine Spirit was breathed and who was made to rule the universe.<sup>2</sup> Shaikh Zāhid's cosmology echoes the Qur'ānic or Jewish-Islamic conception of the supremacy of man on the created beings. The poet says<sup>3</sup>: God wanted to make man the king of all living beings and adorn the world within the universe. He would make him wise so that he might worship Him constantly. All other things He had brought into existence, did not please Him. So He would create man...

It seems easy to detect a few Ṣūfī elements in the cosmogony under consideration. It has been said that the first created being was the 'image of God' or the 'friend of God', who played a vital role in the creation *ex nihilo*. This 'image of God' is perhaps a distant echo of the Perfect Man of Ibn-ul-'Arabī's system: "The Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*), as the image of God and the archetype of Nature, is at once the mediator of divine grace and the cosmic principle by which the world is animated and sustained. And, of course, the perfect man *par excellence* is Muḥammad".<sup>4</sup> We are also told that the image of God was created from the love of God—an idea which rings like a familiar note also in other Ṣūfī writings of Bengal such as the *Jñāna-pradīpa*, the *Yoga-kālandar*, the *Jñāna-sāgara* and the *Āgama*.<sup>5</sup>

1. The obvious reference is to the Book of Genesis in the *Old Testament*.
2. The *Qur'ān*: 14:32-34; 16:10-19; 31:20; 32:9 and 45:12-13.
3. Paraphrased from V.R.S. MS. of the *Ādya Parichaya*; cf. appendix E, for the text.
4. R. A. Nicholson: "Mysticism" in *Legacy of Islam*, pp. 224-25.
5. *Jñāna-sāgara*, pp. 24-25; *Madhya Yuger Kāvya-saṅgraha*, ed. Ahmad Sharif pp. 207-209.

Shaiikh Zāhid's poem exclusively deals with the importance of the human body. A cosmology has been added with a view to indicating the greatness of man but for whose presence God's creation would have been not only incomplete, but also meaningless. As the poem under discussion anticipates most of the yogic-tantric ideas elaborated by Saiyid Sulṭān, it is necessary to discuss its contents at considerable length. While describing the human physique, Shaiikh Zāhid considers it to be a microcosm representing all the attributes of the world. He says : I shall locate in the body, earth, air and fire and the heaven, the world and the underneath world. I shall compare the sun, the moon and the stars of the sky with their counterparts in the body. The rivers, rivulets, the Gaṅgā and the Bhāgīrathī are always flowing in the physical body... The body is the abode of the four ages of Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. It contains four Vedas and four scriptures ( possibly Old Testament, Psalms, New Testament and the Qur'an )... There are mountain-peaks, jungles and animals in it.<sup>1</sup>

As will be indicated below, emphasis on the physical organism, dominates all the yogic-tantric systems, including the Buddhist Sahajiyā, Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā and Nāthism. Although Shaiikh Zāhid is not clear as to why so much stress should be put on the body, it may be reasonably conjectured that he aims at physical culture or *Kāyāsādhana* and *Yoga-tantra* or principles of *yoga* which he frequently mentions in the introductory section of the poem. That this physical culture was of a regressive nature, is hinted at in the following lines : "Brahmā says that the root of the tree is trembling. But man's root is a reverse one". The idea expressed reminds us of the Upaniṣadic fig-tree with its roots upward and its branches downward.<sup>2</sup> The poet also refers to *somarasa* which indicates the process of drinking nectar with the help of *khecharī mudrā* resorted to generally by the Nāthist. He mentions

1. *Ādya Parichaya*, *op. cit.*

2. See below.

the name of Gorakṣa Nātha at several places. Thus the poem under discussion reflects Nātha influences which constituted a potential factor in the religious *milieu* of medieval Bengal.

Great emphasis has been put in the Ṣūfi-yogic Bengali literature, on the human body described very often as a microcosm of the universe. The Ṣūfis believe that the body contains the sum-total of qualities available in the universe.<sup>1</sup> It is considered to be an abode of four Vedas, nine planets, various signs of the Zodiac, seven heavens, seven infernal regions and several mystic realms.<sup>2</sup> Biological phenomena like women's conception and abortion, the formation of the body of the child in the mother's womb, sexual intercourse, preservation of semen and location of sexual feelings in the different parts of the body of women at different times, are elaborately discussed in the literature under consideration.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the unlimited importance of the body, the essential principles of Yogic Ṣūfi-ism as propounded by the Bengali Ṣūfis, have been located in the physical system. Following the idea of the *Ṣaṭ-chakra* or six nerve-plexuses found in the tantric and yogic texts, these Ṣūfis have conceived of the existence of six circles namely *Mulādhāra-chakra* or the sacri-coccygeal plexus having four petals and the brightness of the morning sun, *Svādhīṣṭhāna-chakra* or the sacral plexus, *Maṇipura-chakra* or the lumbar plexus, *Anāhata-chakra* or the abode of life possessing twelve petals and the colour of burning gold, *Vishuddha-chakra* or the laryngeal and pharyngeal plexus with sixteen petals, having the brightness of the moon and *Ājñā-chakra* having two petals over which there is the thousand-petalled lotus, the abode of *Āyḍā-shakti* or the primordial goddess.<sup>4</sup>

1. Saiyid Sulṭān : *Jñāna-pradīpa*, D. U. MS. fol. 9b. For Bengali text, see appendix E.
2. *Ibid.* fols. 3b, 8b, 9a, 9b, etc.
3. *Ibid.* fols. 6b-8a, 12b etc.
4. *Ibid.* fols. 9a and 10a-10b.

In the yogic Ṣūfī psycho-physiological process, nerves play an important part. Saiyid Sulṭān has given a theory of nerves in the following lines: “*Īṅgalā* and *Piṅgalā* are the two nerves running by the two sides of the spinal chord and looking like two creeping plants hanging by the two sides of a tree. The nerve *Īṅgalā* in the right may be compared with the sun and the *Piṅgalā* in the left resembles the moon. The *Īṅgalā* is the flow of the Ganges and the *Piṅgalā* that of the Jumna. The nerve running between the god and the demon is called *Suṣumnā*. These three meet at a point which is regarded by the wise as the confluence of the three sacred rivers.”<sup>1</sup> We come across the description of other nerves such as *Gāndhārī*, *Kuhū*, *Hastijihvā*, *Ālamvuṣā*, *Shāṅkhinī* and others together with slight references to the functions of some of them.<sup>2</sup>

It has been said that there are numerous *āsanas* or sitting postures of which *Padmāsana* or the ‘Lotus posture’ is quite important. In this posture, the Ṣūfī sits with his left leg placed on the right leg, his hands resting on the legs, his chin touching the chest and his concentration fixed on the nose.<sup>3</sup> Saiyid Sulṭān has tried to simplify the yogic process of physical exercise by accepting the *Padmāsana* to the exclusion of other postures which are defined in yogic and tantric texts.

The regulation of breath occupies a prominent place in the yogic-ṣūfī literature under reference. Describing the process, the poet says, “The middle nerve *Suṣumnā* is the best of all nerves. This is the passage through which the primordial goddess can be worshipped... take air by the left nostril while the right one is closed, the process being similar to

1. *Ibid.* fol. 10a. For the corresponding Bengali text, see appendix e.

2. *Ibid.* fols. 9b-10a; see appendix e for the text.

3. *Ibid.* fol. 9b. The description of the *Padmāsana* as given by Saiyid Sulṭān slightly differs from that found in the *Hathayoga Pradīpikā*, tran. by Srinivas Iyengar; ch. 1, verse 46, p. 20.



that by which a piece of thread passes through the eye of a needle... when the air will enter into the body, a peculiar sound will come out. As you will listen to the sound, your mind will be fixed... you are to find out light in that sound so that your mind may be annihilated. This is the path leading to the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> We find frequent references to *purak* (inhalation of breath by the left nostril), *kumbhak* (retention of breath), *dhyāna* (fixed attention), *mudrā* (posture), and *samādhi* (ecstatic concentration)<sup>2</sup> although there is no detailed description of these yogic methods.

The different ideas and practices relating to the physical body appear to have been utilized by the Ṣūfīs as a means to a particular end about which there are clear indications in the Ṣūfī literature of Bengal. By resorting to various bodily attitudes combined with inhalations and exhalations of breath and the fixation of the gaze on certain particular points, the Ṣūfī can attain not only physical perfection and freedom from diseases, but also immortality.<sup>3</sup> As already noticed, this physical culture is also “the path leading to the Lord.”

Yogic and tantric systems of Indian philosophy are characterized by the development of a physiological system of nerves including *Īṅgalā*, *Pīṅgalā* and the *Suṣumnā*, six *chakras* or psychic circles and a secret female energy residing at the lowest part of the spine. Remaining as it does in a coiled condition, it is called *Kuṇḍalinī Shakti* or Coiled Energy which, when aroused, can make the circles work. The spinal column is the abode of the nerve *Suṣumnā* which extends from the *Mulādhāra-chakra* or the basal region of the vertical column to the *Sahasrāra* situated in the cerebral region. The other five *chakras* are the *Svādhiṣṭhāna* situated near the root of the penis, *Maṇipura* in the region of navel, *Anāhata* in the heart,

1. *Jñāna-pradīpa*, D. U. MS. fol. 10a ; cf. appendix E for the text.

2. *Ibid.* fols. 11a, 12a, 12b etc.

3. *Ibid.* fols. 4b and 12a.

*Vishuddha* at the meeting place of the spinal chord and the medulla oblongata and *Ājñā* between the eye-brows. To the right of the chief nerve *Susumnā*, there is *Piṅgalā* and to its left *Īṅgalā*. These three nerves are known in the yoga literature as the Gaṅgā, the Yamunā and the Sarasvatī respectively, their meeting point being called the *trivenī* or the confluence of these three rivers. *Īṅgalā* and *Piṅgalā* are also known as the sun and the moon respectively.<sup>1</sup> Of the eight *yogāṅgas*, the method of ethical preparation as represented by *yama* (abstention) and *niyama* (observance), *āsana* (physical postures), *prāṇāyāma* (breath control) and *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of senses from their normal external functioning) constitute the preparatory state of purgation. *Dhyāna* (fixed attention) and *dhāraṇā* (contemplation) represent the state of illumination, while *samādhi* or concentration constitutes that of union.<sup>2</sup> The biological and psychological processes of tantric and *haṭhayogic* philosophy aim at arousing the *Kuṇḍalinī Shakti* and giving it an upward flow with a view to uniting it with Shiva in the highest region of *Sahasrāra*. Shiva being the motionless immortal Being and Shakti the principle of change, union of Shiva with Shakti indicates the suspension of the process of change and activity and the attainment of the changeless state of immortality through a bio-psychological method of retrogression. As the practice is of an upward nature, it is generally known as *ulṭā sādhanā* or the regressive culture resorted to by almost all of the mystic cults including

1. Nerves, *chakras* and the *Kuṇḍalinī Shakti* are frequently mentioned in the *Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā*, *op. cit.* chs. I, II and IV; *Kapilāshramiṇya Pātañjala Yogadarshana*, ed. and Bengali tran. by Hariharānanda Āraṇya, Dharmamegha Āraṇya and Ray J. G. Bahadur, 4th ed. pp. 203-04; Sukhamaya Bhattacharya: *Tantra Parichaya*, pp. 46-49; S. B. Das Gupta: *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 91, f.n. 1; Upendra Nath Bhattacharya: *Vāṅglār Vāul O Vāul Gān*, pp. 438-48; S. Radhakrishnan: *op. cit.* II, p. 352, f.n. 1.
2. *Ibid.* II, p. 357.

Tantricism, Buddhist Sahajiyā, Vaiṣṇavism, Nāthism and Vāul sect. The germs of the regressive *sādhana* can be found in the Upaniṣat, the *Bhagavat Gītā* and the Vedānta.<sup>1</sup>

A comparison of these yogic and tantric ideas and practices with those embodied in the Bengali Ṣufī literature analyzed above, clearly shows that the Muslim mystics had adopted them from the indigenous systems of *yoga* and *tantra* philosophy. The *Jñāna-pradīpa* is full of indications of the yoga-tantric regressive discipline. Apart from regarding the nerve *Suṣumnā* as "the passage through which one can worship the primordial goddess," Saiyid Sulṭān places the Lord or *Prabhu* in the region of *Saharāra*.<sup>2</sup> Thus he appears to have presupposed union between the two, which, as we have already found, is also the ultimate aim of the followers of the *yogic-tantric* cults of medieval Bengal. At one place, he says, "sins of crores of birth can do no harm to him who takes his bath at the *ghāṭ* of *trivenī*".<sup>3</sup> It is at the confluence of the three rivers that the yogic and tantric spiritualists start their mental and physical disciplines by stopping the flows of the Gaṅgā ( *Piṅgalā* ) and the Yamunā ( *Īṅgalā* ) and diverting them along the upward course of the Sarasvatī ( *Suṣumna* ).<sup>4</sup> Thus it is highly probable that the regressive spiritual discipline had been accepted by some of the Ṣufīs of Bengal.

Before considering the possible source of the yogic and tantric ideas of Bengali Ṣufism, we may try to take into account some of the Ṣufī elements betrayed by the mystical literature under review. After identifying the *manzils* (stations) of *Sharī'at* ( the Islāmic canon law ), *Ṭarīqat* ( the Path ), *Ḥaqīqat* ( the

1. S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 92 ff, pp. 98, 229-33 etc ; and *Bhāratiya Sādhana Aikya*, pp. 4-52 ; Sukhamaya Bhattacharya : *op. cit.* p. 49.
2. *Jñāna-pradīpa*, fol. 10b.
3. *Ibid.* fol. 10a ; cf. appendix E for the text.
4. S. B. Das Gupta : *Bhāratiya Sādhana Aikya*, p. 49.

Reality) and *Ma'rifat* (the Gnosis), with the *maqāmāt* or Ṣūfī-istic stages of *Nāsūt* (humanity), *Malakūt* (dominion), *Jabarūt* (almightiness) and *Lāhut* (divinity) respectively, Saiyid Sulṭān goes on prescribing religious duties to be performed by the Ṣūfī at each of these stations. Prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, cultivation of altruistic virtues and physical purity are meant for the *manzil* of *Sharī'at*. Each of the stages being of a preparatory nature, the disciple who has fulfilled his obligations satisfactorily at the station of *Sharī'at*, can reach the next higher stage of *Ṭarīqat* or the Ṣūfī Path where he should suppress his sexual desire, anger, temptation and delusion. At the station of *Ḥaqīqat* or the Reality, he should check hunger, thirst and idleness and possess self-control. Arriving at the station of *Ma'rifat* or the Gnosis, he is in a position to know himself.<sup>1</sup>

The four *maqāmāt* frequently mentioned by the Ṣūfīs of Bengal should be distinguished from the *maqāmāt* or the acquired virtues of the Ṣūfī as elaborately discussed by Abū Naṣr-us-Sarrāj<sup>2</sup> and 'Alī bin 'Uṭh mān-ul-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī.<sup>3</sup> Describing *maqāmāt*, Hujwīrī says, "Station (*maqām*) denotes anyone's 'standing' in the way of God, and his fulfilment of the obligations thereof. Thus the first 'station' is repentance (*tawbat*), then comes conversion (*inābat*), then renunciation (*zuhd*), then trust in God (*tawakkul*), and so on : it is not permissible that anyone should pretend to conversion without repentance, or to renunciation without conversion, or to trust in God without renunciation".<sup>4</sup> There is a fundamental difference between a *maqām* (station) and *ḥāl* (state). Hujwīrī further says, "State (*ḥāl*), on the other hand, is something that descends from God

1. Fols. 1a-1b.

2. *Kitāb-ul-Luma'-fi't-Taṣawwuf*: ed. Nicholson. While walking along the mystic path, the Ṣūfī has to traverse each of the *maqāmāt* of repentance, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God and satisfaction; *ibid.* 43-54.

3. *Kaṣḥf-ul-Maḥjūb*, tran. Nicholson, pp. 180-82 and 370-71.

4. *Ibid.* p. 181.

into a man's heart, without his being able to repel it when it comes, or to attract it when it goes, by his own effort. Accordingly, while the term 'station' denotes the way of the seeker, and his progress in the field of exertion, and his rank before God in proportion to his merit, the term 'state' denotes the favour and grace which God bestows upon the heart of His servant, and which are not connected with any mortification on the latter's part. 'Station' belongs to the category of acts, "state" to the category of gifts. Hence the man that has a 'station' stands by his own self-mortification, whereas a man that has a 'state' is dead to 'self' and stands by a 'state' which God creates in him".<sup>1</sup> Apart from accepting the tenets as enumerated above, the later Ṣūfī believe that the gradual ascent of the soul of the Ṣūfī is related to the four *maqāmāt* of *Nāsūt*, *Malakūt*, *Jabarūt* and *Lāhūt*. *Nāsūt* is the natural state of humanity possessed by every individual. *Malakūt* is the sacred state of angels and delicate bodies, whence the Ṣūfī starts the spiritual journey. Here he prays to God, absorbing himself in the divine thought and giving up all actions and evil contemplations. In the state of *Jabarūt*, the Ṣūfī realizes and acquires divine power. The state of *Lāhūt* is a pantheistic one where the Ṣūfī finds himself in the nature of God which comprehends everything of the universe. These four states again correspond to *Sharī'at*, *Ṭarīqat*, *Ma'rifat* and *Ḥaqīqat* respectively.<sup>2</sup> Allegorically speaking, the Ṣūfī traverses a long 'path' or *Ṭarīqat* consisting of acquired virtues and mystical states, before reaching the higher spiritual planes of the Gnosis or *Ma'rifat* and the Truth or *Ḥaqīqat* where he realizes no distinction between his self and the Reality. "Gnosis is the life of the heart through God, and the turning away of one's inmost thoughts from all that is

1. *Ibid.* p. 181. The 'states' or *aḥwāl* are meditation, nearness to God, love, fear, hope, longing, intimacy, tranquillity, contemplation and certainty; *Kitāb-ul-Luma'*, pp. 55-72.
2. John A. Subhan : *Ṣūfism, Its Saints And Shrines*, An Introduction to the Study of Ṣūfism with Special Reference to India, p. 75 ; Sikdar Iqbal Ali Shah : *Islamic Ṣūfism*, p. 294.

not God".<sup>1</sup> *Ma'rifat* or the Gnosis, as distinguished from intellectual and traditional knowledge, may be defined as "knowledge of the attributes of the divine Unity, peculiar to the saints who behold God with their hearts," and is attainable in a state of ecstasy.<sup>2</sup> In the *Şūfī* philosophy, the term *Ḥaqīqat* or the Truth signifies "a reality which does not admit of abrogation and remains in equal force from the time of Adam to the end of the world" and it also means "a man's dwelling in the place of union with God, and the standing of his heart in the place of abstraction (*tanzīh*)".<sup>3</sup> Besides including all these *Şūfī* elements in his philosophical system, Saiyid Sulṭān holds the panentheistic view that the Creator who lives in the eternal void, is the Ultimate Reality and the underlying principle of causation.<sup>4</sup> *Şūfīs* like Sarrāj and Hujwīrī hold that 'Alī possessed a great deal of mystic knowledge.<sup>5</sup> In the *Jānān-pradīpa*, he is depicted as receiving esoteric knowledge from Muḥammad<sup>6</sup> whom the *Şūfīs* call the Perfect Man or *Insān-ul-Kāmil*,<sup>7</sup> capable of imparting instructions in mysticism. Saiyid Sulṭān has gone to the extent of identifying the Prophet not only with the creation but also with the Creator.<sup>8</sup> This is probably an indication of pantheism which occupies a prominent place in the philosophical system under review.

1. Hujwīrī : *op. cit.* p. 267.

2. R. A. Nicholson : "Mysticism" in *Legacy of Islam*, pp. 214 and 215. For a detailed discussion on this point, see Nicholson : *The Mystics of Islam*, ch. III, pp. 68-101.

3. Hujwīrī : *op. cit.* pp. 383 and 384.

4. *Op. cit.* fol. 6a.

5. *Kitāb-ul-Luma'*, p. 129 and *Kaṣṣf-ul-Maḥjūb*, pp. 74 and 269.

6. The whole book is in the form of a dialogue between 'Alī and Muḥammad, the former putting some questions about mystic knowledge and the latter answering them.

7. R. A. Nicholson : "Mysticism," *op. cit.* p. 225.

8. Addressing Muḥammad, 'Alī says : "Thou art the Creation, the Creator and The Reality" ; *op. cit.* fol. 6b, appendix E. Similar ideas are found in many other passages which need not be quoted here.

The Śūfis of Bengal lived, moved and had their being in an atmosphere saturated with the Yogic and Tantric culture which they incorporated in their own religio-philosophical system possibly under the influence of the Nātha cult. As already pointed out, the ideas of the piercing of the six circles, the theory of nerves, the practical regressive culture leading to the union of Shiva with Shakti and the preservation of nectar, are some of the essential features of Nāthism. A significant part of the Nātha text, *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, is in the form of a dialogue<sup>1</sup>—a traditional pattern followed also in the *Jñāna-padīpa* and *Jñāna-sāgara*. While imparting esoteric knowledge to his own teacher Minanātha, Gorakṣanātha discusses thirty mystic topics.<sup>2</sup> Saiyid Sulṭān holds that there are thirty knots in the spinal column which, when penetrated, bring varying degrees of spiritual success to the Śūfi.<sup>3</sup> The *Gorakṣa-vijaya* enumerates a number of signs of the approach of death,<sup>4</sup> most of which are mentioned also in the *Jñāna-pradīpa*. The tradition of eighty-four Siddhās, though of an unhistorical nature, plays an important part in the Nātha philosophy.<sup>5</sup> Saiyid Sulṭān has vaguely referred to eighty-four exhalations of breath to be performed by the Śūfi.<sup>6</sup> Muslim contacts with the Nātha cult of medieval Bengal is evidenced by the fact that the authorship of the famous *Gorakṣa-vijaya* which recounts the achievements of Gorakṣa Nātha, is very often ascribed to a Muslim poet named Shaiḫ Faiḍullāh. The system of various control called *khemā* (literally meaning safety, security or tranquillity) in the Nātha terminology, is described as a vigilant sentinel to be placed in the different centres of the body so that the wealth

1. *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, *op. cit.* pp. 130-47.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 131-43.

3. *Op. cit.* fol. 11b.

4. *Op. cit.* pp. 143-45.

5. S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 202 ff; Kalyani Mallik : *Nātha Sampradāyer Itihāsa, Darshana O Sādhana Praṇālī*, pp. 11 and 90.

6. *Op. cit.* fol. 9b.

of the body may not be taken away by decay or change.<sup>1</sup> While describing the function of *khemā*, Sayid Sulṭān identifies it with the supreme reality and religion and thinks that it can check mortality.<sup>2</sup> The mouth of the curved duct *Shaṅkhiṇī* which extends from the *Sahasrāra* to the palatal region and which forms the passage through which *somarasa* or nectar passes, is called in Nāthism, the tenth door of the body by closing which one can preserve and drink nectar.<sup>3</sup> The *Jñāna-pradīpa* contains references to the tenth door and the *Shaṅkhiṇī* which is described as a nerve having three bent portions, a knowledge of which is supposed to take away the fear for death.<sup>4</sup> The Muslim poet describes the process of drinking nectar as one of turning the tongue backwards into the hollow above with a view to preserving *amṛta* (nectar) so that it may be taken by the Ṣūfī.<sup>5</sup> In this work, we frequently come across Nātha conceptions of *ajapājapa*, *haṁsanāda* and void.<sup>6</sup> The presence of so many Nātha elements in the Ṣūfī literature of Bengal, is thus suggestive of the fact that most of the tantric and yogic ideas prevailing among some of the Ṣūfīs, had come through the channel of Nāthism.

The Ṣūfīs of the period in question had possibly genuine reasons to accept the regressive physical and spiritual culture which was not totally foreign to their system. The mystical journey from the lowest state of humanity or *Nāsūt* to the highest one of divinity or *Lāhūt* involves an upward process. In an abstract sense, the devotee tries through this regressive

1. S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, pp. 233-34.

2. *Op. cit.* fol. 2b.

3. S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, pp. 239-40.

4. *Op. cit.* fol. 3a ; cf. appendix E for the text. This curved nerve is referred to also in the *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, p. 92 : "Oh *Guru*, practise (physical culture) through the curved duct."

5. *Jñāna-pradīpa*, fols. 2a, 10b and 12a.

6. *Op. cit.* fols. 4b and 10b. For an explanation of some of these Nātha ideas, see *supra*. p. 184.



practice to give an upward motion to his generally downward tendencies with a view to attaining perfection. As Nicholson puts it, "Hence the upward movement of the Absolute from the sphere of manifestation back to the unmanifested Essence takes place in and through the unitive experience of the soul".<sup>1</sup> The Naqshbandī Ṣūfīs of North India developed a theory of six *Laṭīfas* or centres of divine light to be located in the human body. These are *qalb* or heart, *ruh* or soul, *sirr* or secret heart, *khaṭṭ* or secret soul, and *nafs* or evil self. It seems that the theory of *Laṭā'if* is an imitation of the theory of six circles of the Yoga philosophy.<sup>2</sup> To the list of *Laṭā'if* the Qādiri Ṣūfīs add a few more names such as *Dil Muda-wwarī* or the circular mind situated in the head, *Dil Nilūfurī* or the mind of blue lotus situated in the middle part of the two groins, *Dil Ṣanawwarī* or the conical mind situated beneath the left breast and *Dil 'Ambarī* or the mind of amber under the right breast. It is believed that various kinds of divine light descend on these centres when the Ṣūfī performs *dhikr*.<sup>3</sup>

Thus it seems well-established that some of the Ṣūfīs of northern India had developed certain mystic ideas quite akin to those obtaining in the Indian Yoga philosophy. The presence of the tantric and yogic ideas in the religio-philosophical system evolved by some of the Ṣūfīs of Bengal, may be satisfactorily explained, if we bear in mind that Ṣūfism, both Indian and Iranian, is a syncretic movement which has absorbed a good deal of elements from a variety of sources such as Christianity, Neo-Platonism, Buddhism and Vedānta philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, p. 84.

2. John A. Subhan : *op. cit.* pp. 61-62 and 149. Enamul Huq : *Ṣūfism in Bengal* (Unpublished thesis).

3. *Ibid.* Explaining the term *Laṭā'if* (Sing. *Latifa*), Hujwīrī says that they mean "A symbol (*ishārati*), presented to the heart, of subtleties of feelings" ; *op. cit.* p. 385.

4. *J.R.A.S.* 1904, 125 ff. ; R. A. Nicholson : *The Mystics of Islam*, Introduction, pp. 10-19 and "Mysticism" *op. cit.* pp. 213 and

In Bengal also, it has adapted itself to the local, philosophical ideas and mystic practices.

The complicated type of yogic-tantric Ṣūfī-ism discussed above continued to prevail in Bengal also in the succeeding periods. The *Yoga-Kālandar* (of Saiyid Mortūḍā ?) considered to be a seventeenth-century work,<sup>1</sup> and the *Jñāna-sāgara*<sup>2</sup> of 'Alī Riḍā who seems to have been alive in the early nineteenth century, preserve almost whatever we find in the *Jñāna-pradīpa* and give us a fair idea about the changes that were gradually taking place in the Ṣūfī pantheon of Bengal.

Besides dealing with the signs of death, the constituent elements of the body, the place of the *murshid* or the spiritual teacher in the Ṣūfī hagiology and the sources of light such as the sun, the moon and water on which the Ṣūfī is advised to concentrate his mind at the time of meditation,<sup>3</sup> the writer of the *Yoga-Kālandar* gives a detailed account of the *maqāms* of *Nāsūt*, *Malakūt*, *Jaburūt* and *Lāhūt* identifying them not only with the *manzils* of *Sharī'at*, *Tarīqat*, *Ḥaqīqat* and *Mu'rifat*, but also with the *chakras* of *Mulādhāra*, *Maṇipura*, *Ājñā* and *Anāhata* respectively, locating an angel at each of these regions and considering them to be the abode of seasons like summer, autumn spring and *sharat* or the period following the rainy season.<sup>4</sup> The religious duties prescribed for each of these *maqāms* do not at all differ from those mentioned by Saiyid Sulṭān.

215 ; Philip K. Hitti : *History of The Arabs*, 4th ed. p. 433.

1. Enamul Huq : *Muslim Vāṅglā Sāhitya*, pp. 193-95.
2. Ed. Abdul Karim Sāhitya Vishārad.
3. The unpublished composite text of the *Yoga-Kālandar* in the V. R. S. Museum, ed. by Enamul Huq, pp. 5-8 and 12-16. We have compared this text with a copy of the *Yoga-Kālandar* in Arabic script, now in Dacca University Library. The latter does not differ materially from Enamul Huq's edition.
4. *Ibid.* V.R.S. Museum MS. pp. 2-5 and 7-8.

Following the Şūfī custom, the writer of the *Yoga-Kālandar* mentions four kinds of mind such as *Dil Mudawwarī*,<sup>1</sup> *Dil Şanawwarī*, *Dil ‘Ambarī* and *Dil Nilūfarī*.<sup>1</sup> Muḥammad, the Perfect Man of the Şūfīs, has been placed in the *maqām* of *Lāhūt* where the Şūfī may come in contact with his light (*nūr*).<sup>2</sup>

The Şūfī work under consideration contains a good deal of Nātha-yogic elements. Apart from mentioning some of the *chakras* or circles, the poet enjoins upon the Şūfī the performance of the *ajapājapa* of Nāthism, refers to the *anāhata* sound and considers the thousand-petalled lotus to be the abode of the Lord or *Prabhu* with whom preliminary contacts can be made at the *trivenī* or the confluence of the three rivers.<sup>3</sup> There is a description of postures like *Padmāsana* ( lotus posture ), *Mayūrāsana* ( peacock posture ), *Garbhāsana* ( posture resembling that of a child in the mother’s womb ) and *Yogāsana* ( yogic posture )<sup>4</sup> which have been described in the yogic works like the *Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā* and the *Gorakṣa Saṁhitā*.<sup>5</sup> Apart from betraying a general air of Nātha influences, the *Yoga-Kālandar* contains a few elements of the Hindu Tantra and Upaniṣat. It has been said that the four *maqāms* of *Nāsūt*, *Malakūt*, *Jabarūt*, and *Lāhūt*, identified with the four *chakras*, are dominated by the four elements of fire, air, water and earth respectively.<sup>6</sup> Instead of placing the abstract sentinel or *khemā* of the Nāthapanthis at the various places of the body, he locates the angel ‘Azrā’il at *Nāsūt* or *Mulādhāra*, Isrā’īl at *Malakūt* or *Maṇipura*, Mikā’il at *Jabarūt* or *Ājñā* and Jibrīl at *Lāhūt* or *Anāhata*, the four angels having the appearances of a tiger, a snake, an elephant and a peacock respectively putting on red,

1. *Ibid.* p. 10.

2. *Ibid.* p. 5.

3. *Ibid.* pp. 5, 6 and 14.

4. *Ibid.* p. 11.

5. *Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā*, ch. 1, verses, 31, 45 etc; *Gorakṣa Saṁhitā* ed. Prasanna Kumar Kaviratna, see sls. 8 and 10.

6. V.R.S. Museum MS. pp. 7-8.

green, white and yellow garments and each riding on a horse of a similar colour.<sup>1</sup> In the Hindu Tantras, the five *chakras* of *Mulādhāra*, *Svādhiṣṭhāna*, *Maṇipura*, *Anāhata* and *Vishuddha* representing the elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether respectively, are presided over by the five gods, viz., Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Īshāna and Mahādeva. The first three gods have red, blue and vermilion colours and the last two gods are white.<sup>2</sup> The colour scheme of the Ṣūfīs, mentioned above, resembles the tantric one. The angels residing at the different *maqāms* or *chakras* seem to be the Islamic counterparts of the gods of the Hindu Tantras. Again the union of the *Jīvātmā* and the *Paramātmā*, which has been regarded as one of the spiritual attainments of the Ṣūfī,<sup>3</sup> is an Upaniṣadic conception. In the Upaniṣat, they have been depicted as two birds living on friendly terms on the same tree. The *Jīvātman* or the sentient soul can taste the sweet fruit of the material, worldly experience which is scrupulously avoided by the *Paramātmā* or the Supreme Being.<sup>4</sup> Thus Ṣūfī-ism, as represented in the *Yoga-Kāṇḍar*, appears to be of a composite nature.

The *Jñāna-sāgara* of 'Alī Ridā contains several Nātha or yogic-tantric ideas. Speaking of the six *chakras*, the poet says : "Inside the body there are six lotuses containing six circles which are the resting-places of six seasons and six *rāgas* or musical scales".<sup>5</sup> He refers to the *ajapājapa*, *haṁsanāda* and the yogic method of breath-control.<sup>6</sup> The regressive process of physical

1. *Ibid.* pp. 2-4, 7-8 and 10.

2. S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 306.

3. V.R.S. Museum MS. p. 5 : "Know that the Supreme Soul resides with the Sentient Soul." "The Sentient Soul has been united with the Supreme Soul" etc ; *Jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā* stand for the human personality and the Divine personality respectively.

4. S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 179.

5. 'Alī Ridā : *Jñāna-sāgara*, p. 71 ; see also p. 45.

6. *Ibid.* pp. 55-56. For these Nātha-yogic terms, see *supra*, ch. v, pp. 184 and 213.

culture finds a regular place in the mystic theory propounded by 'Alī Ridā. The poet says that the path of love is a regressive one. One who does not have the knowledge of this reverse process, cannot enjoy real life. Here the forward is the backward and the backward is the forward. The world process is connected with the principle of inversion. The Lord has kept the path of spiritualism concealed and the unreal path open. This is why man and fairies, after their birth in this world, follow the unreal path of material enjoyment. One can achieve spiritual success by walking along the regressive path.<sup>1</sup> The idea of *Shūnya* or vacuity forms an integral part of the Ṣufī philosophy obtaining in Bengali literature. Saiyid Sulṭān says that the contemplation about the unseen vacuity can give us an insight into the nature of the Ultimate Reality.<sup>2</sup> A distinct echo of this idea is found in the *Jñāna-sāgara* wherein it is said that the ascetic who is the void personified, recites the name of the void and attains spiritual success with the help of the void. He enjoys love dalliances with vacuity which resides in the void and whose main functions are identical with the void. Vacuity contains the Supreme Reality and gives us the knowledge of reality. The yogic contemplation is an accessory to the acquisition of the knowledge of reality.<sup>3</sup> The void is identical with the delicate body. The form of beauty is without any shape. The ocean of the void reveals to the spiritualist the ocean of beauty wherein he finds success.<sup>4</sup> We have already seen that the idea of the void representing a very primitive element, possibly of Kol or Austric origin, with subsequent Brahminical accretions, had been accepted by the Dharmite faith, Nāthism and Tantric Buddhism.<sup>5</sup> The indigenous Ṣufī-ism of Bengal seems to have absorbed this idea because of its contact with these local cults. Like the author of the *Yoga-Kālandar*, 'Alī Ridā also

1. *Op. cit.* pp. 20 and 36-38.

2. *Jñāna-pradīpa*, D. U. MS. fol. 4b; cf. appendix E for the text.

3. *Op. cit.* p. 22.

4. *Ibid.* p. 42.

5. *Supra.* ch. v, p. 184.

puts emphasis on the union of the *Jīvātmā* and the *Paramātmā*<sup>1</sup> which, as already indicated, is an Upaniṣadic conception.<sup>2</sup> It may be mentioned in this connection that 'Alī Riḍā has not hesitated to accept the doctrine of *parakīyā* love. He says : "Love to a *svakīyā* or lawfully married wife is no intense love ; but love to a *parakīyā* or woman belonging to another is suitable for a loving mind."<sup>3</sup> The doctrines of *svakīyā* and *parakīyā* may be explained in this context. "Parakīyā literally means 'pertaining to another', and hence the culture called Parakīyā.....means the observance of mystic practices in the company of women other than one's wedded wife, specially with a married woman whose husband is living."<sup>4</sup> The term *svakīyā*, "when applied to a woman, means a lawfully married wife who is always ready to carry out the wishes of her husband for whom she cherishes unqualified love."<sup>5</sup> The doctrine of *parakīyā* "may properly be regarded as the very foundation whereon rests the mystic edifice of the spiritual culture of the Sahajiyās,"<sup>6</sup> who formed one of the branches of post-Chaitanya Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal. The *parakīyā* element, in the Ṣūfī philosophy, seems to be a post-Chaitanya accretion.

To these local ideas, 'Alī Riḍā has added several pantheistic conceptions obtaining in Islamic mysticism. His cosmogony is dominated by the love of God. He says, "There is not even a single particle that is created except from His love. The Lord is creating everything out of His love. All objects have their origin in the ocean of love. The living being lives

1. *Jñāna-sāgara*, p. 49 : *Jīvātmā paramātmā yugala mishrita*. "Jīvātmā or the sentient soul and *Paramātmā* or the supreme soul are the pair that remain mixed."
2. *Supra*. p. 217.
3. *Jñāna-sāgara*, p. 80 : *Svakīyār saṅge nahe atī premarasa, Parakīyā saṅge yogya premera manāsa*.
4. Manindra Mohan Bose : *op. cit.* p. 19.
5. *Ibid.* p. 20.
6. *Ibid.* p. 19.

on the strength of love ; it dies when it does not have love.”<sup>1</sup> Created beings are but His manifestations. This conception compares quite favourably with the idea expressed by the mystic poet Jāmi' in the following lines :

Although He beheld His attributes and qualities as a perfect  
whole in His own essence,  
Yet He desired that they should be displayed to Him in  
another mirror,  
And that each one of His eternal attributes should become  
manifest accordingly in a diverse form.  
Therefore He created the verdant fields of Time and Space  
and the life-giving garden of the world,  
That every branch and leaf and fruit might show forth His  
various perfections.<sup>2</sup>

Hallāj used to believe that God in the state of aloneness could not realize Himself so that He had to bring into being the Divine image personified by the newly created Adam.<sup>3</sup> While accepting this panentheistic principle, 'Alī Ridā has replaced Adam by Muḥammad, the Perfect Man. He says that the Lord was alone in the beginning. Out of His love, He created a dual who was named Muḥammad. The two represented the original lover and the beloved. In aloneness, no one can enjoy love ; so there is the necessity of a pair.<sup>4</sup> It has also been held by the poet that 'Alī was given mystic knowledge by the prophet Muhammad.<sup>5</sup> Thus the Ṣūfī philosophy of 'Alī Ridā is a combination of a number of diverse ideas.

There seem to have been contacts of the Muslim minds with Yogic and Tantric mysticism as early as the beginning of

1. *Jñāna-sāgara*, pp. 26-27.
2. Cited by R. A. Nicholson : *The Mystics of Islam*, p. 81.
3. R. A. Nicholson : *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, p. 80.
4. *Jñāna-sāgara*, pp. 24-25.
5. *Ibid.* pp. 1, 5 etc.

Muslim rule in Bengal. It is said that a *yogi* of Kāmrūpa named Bhojar Brāhmaṇ, hearing of the spread of Islām in India, reached Lakṣnautī in the reign of 'Alī Mardān (1210-1213 A.D.) in search of a Muslim scholar with whom he might discuss spiritual problems. The *yogi* was introduced to Qāḍī Rukn-ud-dīn Samarqandī. After some discussions, he accepted Islām and subsequently acquired the right of issuing *fatwa*. He is said to have dedicated to the Qāḍī his book *Amṛta-kunḍa* or 'the Reservoir of Nectar' which was translated by the Qāḍī into Arabic and Persian.<sup>1</sup> At a later period, the work seems to have been repeatedly translated by the Muslim Ṣūfīs—a fact indicating possibly something more than mere academic interest of the Muslims in such a work. A pupil of Muḥammad Ghawṭh Gawālīārī, the sixteenth century Indian Ṣūfī, translated this work into Persian under the title *Baḥr-ul-Ḥayāt* or 'The Ocean of Life' which was illustrated in the early seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup>

The Arabic version of the *Amṛta-kunḍa* gives an account of the human body viewed as the microcosm, the nature and form of the heart, yogic postures, the nature of the self, the protection of semen, the faculty of imagination, the functions of breath, the signs of the approach of death together with the means of warding them off and the spiritual regions presided over by different goddesses.<sup>3</sup>

1. *Ḥaṣḍ-ul-Ḥayāt* or the Arabic version of the *Amṛta-kunḍa* has been published by Yousuf Husain in *Journal Asiatique*, Tom ccxiii, 1928, October-December, pp. 306-44. For the story connected with the *yogi*'s conversion and the rendering of the *Amṛta-kunḍa*, see text, *op. cit.* pp. 311-13.
2. The Persian version called *Baḥr-ul-Ḥayāt* has been published from Bombay in 1310 A.H., at the Faizul Karim Press. For an account of the illustrated MS. of this Persian translation, see *A Catalogue of the Indian Miniatures* by Sir Thomas W. Arnold, revised and edited by J.V.S. Wilkinson, vol. I, pp. 80-82.
3. *Ḥaṣḍ-ul-Ḥayāt*, *op. cit.* pp. 316-44.



Without entering into the details of this work, we may try to find out some of its important features. One of its hymns contains the names of Mīna or Matsyendranātha and Gorakṣanātha<sup>1</sup> who are inseparably connected with the history, legend and religion of the Nāthists. In the second chapter of the book, the right nostril of the microcosm has been called the sun and the left nostril the moon.<sup>2</sup> It seems to be an echo of the Nātha-yogic theory of the sun and the moon representing the nerves *Piṅgalā* and *Īṅgalā* respectively.<sup>3</sup> The introductory section of the work refers to one Ambuānāth upon whose help the translator of the *Amṛta-kuṇḍa* had to depend.<sup>4</sup> The name ending with 'nāth' indicates that he was a follower of the Nātha cult. Though a few *āsanas* have been described in the Arabic *Ḥauḍ-ul-Ḥayāt* and the Persian *Bahr-ul-Ḥayāt*,<sup>5</sup> it has been stated in both versions that the total number of these yogic postures is eighty-four<sup>6</sup>—a number quite prominent in the Nātha mythology. The illustrated manuscript of *Bahr-ul-Ḥayāt* contains illustrations and descriptions of twenty-one *āsanas* including *Padmāsana* (lotus posture), *Siṃhāsana* (lion posture), *khecharī mudrā* and *Sabhāsana* (posture resembling the one taken in a meeting),<sup>7</sup> which have been duly defined in some of the works on *yoga* culture.<sup>8</sup> The following

1. *Ibid.* p. 337.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 316-17.

3. S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 235 ff; Kalyani Mallik : *Nātha Sampradāyer Itihāsa Darshana O Sādhana Praṇālī* pp. 536-37.

4. *Ḥauḍ-ul-Ḥayāt*, *op. cit.* p. 313.

5. In the *Ḥauḍ-ul-Ḥayāt*, only five postures have been described ; *op. cit.* pp. 323-25 ; but twenty-one postures have been illustrated and described in a MS. of the *Bahr-ul-Ḥayāt* ; see Thomas W. Arnold : *A Catalogue of Indian Miniatures*, I, pp. 81-82.

6. *Ḥauḍ-ul-Ḥayāt*, *op. cit.* p. 323 ; Arnold : *A Catalogue of Indian Miniatures*, vol. I, p. 80.

7. *Ibid.* p. 82.

8. *Gorakṣa Samhitā*, verses 8 and 10 ; *Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā*, ch. I, verses 46 and 50-51. Turning the tongue into the hole of the



Garbhāsana ( from *Bahī-ul-Hayat* )



که در کتب کتب کند با وی که با عفتنا شده است از پورگی  
 هم دله مانع بر عفت کند و اگر نه او شکست سوزند چون نام العیاض  
 چشم را از دار و ز بازرا یکم جفت اند نعل از راه پستی است  
 جدا آمدن و بعد باز سسل دورگی را از سر عاز کند چون درون  
 گویند چون برین بر که و کتبک نامه درین مگذارد و بر یک خوانند



اگر کسی آسن برای قوت زنی در کجی کردن و پشت و سینه  
 طایر و خشک شدن نهان که شد بای تن است این طبعه یکبار  
 که نیمی است باقی بر لب شده و بای حب باقی میان  
 شد بفرخی و سستی با بر عادت چیده کرد و در آغاز شکل است



passage of the Arabic translation of the *Amṛta-kunḍa* seems to hint at the regressive physical culture : "The microcosm is like a tree reversed. If you like to reverse it, you can reverse but its meaning without affecting it. When its meaning is reverse, it becomes straight. Then it becomes reverse in form and straight in meaning."<sup>1</sup> The idea seems to correspond to the Upaniṣadic conception. This world is considered to be a perpetual fig tree whose roots are upward and whose branches are downward. The root of this tree has been identified with the white light, the reality and nectar. People are sheltered by it. Nobody can go beyond it.<sup>2</sup> Some of the signs of death mentioned in the *Amṛta-kunḍa* are found in the *Gorakṣa-vijaya*.<sup>3</sup> While discussing the Nātha cult together with its yogic ideas and practices, Muḥsin Fanī, the writer of the *Dabistān-ul-Madhāhib* has incidentally mentioned that the *Amṛta-kunḍa* is the religious book of the followers of Gorakṣanātha.<sup>4</sup> Thus it seems fairly certain that the book was used, if not written, by the Nathists.

The development that took place in the Ṣūfī philosophy in Bengal in the period under review, was probably a continuous one in the course of which yogic and trantric ideas had been transmitted to the Muslims through a long process of

palate is technically called *Khechari Mudrā* ; see *Hathayoga Pradīpikā*, ch. III, verse 37 ; see also Arnold : *A Catalogue of Indian Miniature Painting*, I, p. 82 ; illustration no. 14. We have already seen that *Khechari Mudrā* is also the Nathist method of drinking nectar which was accepted by some of the Bengali Ṣūfīs, *supra*, p. 203. The illustrations of the *Garbha* and *Sabhā* postures obtaining in the MS. of *Baḥr-ul-Hayāt* have been published by Arnold : *The Catalogue of Indian Miniatures*, III, pl. 98. See also pls. I and II attached hereto.

1. *Ḥauḍ-ul-Hayāt*, *op. cit.* p. 341.
2. *Kāthopaniṣat*, cited by S. B. Das Gupta in *Bhāratīya Sādhana Aikya*, p. 8.
3. *Ḥauḍ-ul-Hayāt*, p. 335 and *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, p. 143.
4. *Dabistān-ul-Madhāhib*, Bombay ed. p. 144.

change in their religio-philosophical mentality. The act of borrowing ideas from indigenous sources does not appear to be of a deliberate nature. The mystic philosophy of Saiyid Sulṭān bears remarkable resemblances to Nāthism. The writers of *Yoga-Kālandar* and *Jñāna-sāgara* who may be reasonably regarded as his spiritual successors, have added to his mystic ideas, a few Sabajiyā and Upaniṣadic conceptions without affecting the spirit of his philosophy. While emphasizing the influence of indigenous ideas upon these Muslim mystics, one should not overlook the presence of Ṣūfistic conception of pantheism in their works.

The spirit of synthesis obtains also in other works of Saiyid Sulṭān such as *Navī Vainsha* and *Ofāte-Rasūl*<sup>1</sup> in which the poet has combined history with mythology. While giving an account of the prophets recognized by Islām, he regards the four Vedas as a series of divine revelation. As he finds hardly any difference between an *avatāra* (incarnation) and a *nabi* (one who has received revelation), he considers Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheshvara and Kṛṣṇa, the gods of the Hindu mythology and Muḥammad, the prophet of Islām, to be the incarnations of God. He says that the teachings of these four Hindu gods who were given the divine scriptures of Ṛk, Sāma, Yaju and Atharva Vedas respectively, stood obsolete in course of time so that Adam, Sis, Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, Dāwūd, Sulaymān, 'Īsa and Muḥammad appeared gradually on the earth with a view to propagating *tawḥīd* or monotheism. He has tried to put emphasis on the idea that the advent of the prophet Muḥammad has been prophesied in the four Vedas.<sup>2</sup> Like a Hindu poet, he

1. *Ofāte-Rasūl* or 'the Demise of the Prophet' has been edited by Ali Ahmad and published from Noakhali, 1356 B. S. Several MSS. of *Navī Vainsha* are available, one being included in Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharada's Collection in D. U. Library.
2. Extracts and quotations from *Navī Vainsha*, given by Enamul Huq : *Muslim Vāṅglā Sāhitya*, pp. 149-50 and *S.P.P.* 1341 B. S. 2nd issue, p. 50.

gives a vivid description of the *Bṛndāvana-līlā* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.<sup>1</sup> One of his Vaiṣṇava poems<sup>2</sup> depicting the scene of Rādhā's union with Kṛṣṇa, seems to have referred to the union of the sentimental soul with the Supreme Being, the whole poem being thus a symbolical one.

The cultural synthesis, which Saiyid Sulṭān has thus attempted, may be attributed to the force of the socio-religious circumstances under which the Bengali Muslims lived in those days. He tells us that he was writing on Islamic themes for the Bengali Muslims who were acquainted with local fictions and not with Islamic stories.<sup>3</sup> He was probably conscious of the fact that Islamic ideas, if combined with Hindu elements, would appeal to the minds of the local Musalmans to whom the Hindu mythology was already known. This psychology seems to explain his acceptance of *Avatāravād* or the doctrine of incarnation and yogic-tantric ideas of *ṣaṭ-chakra* as integral parts of his religious philosophy.

### III

Vaiṣṇavism, the powerful religious movement initiated by Shri-Chaitanya, carried every thing before it for a considerable period in the life of Bengal. It is necessary here to discuss its relation with Islām which was also making rapid progress in the country. Attempts have been made to assess the influence of Islamic mysticism on the emotional philosophy of Vaiṣṇavism. *Ḥāl* (ecstatic condition), *dhikr* (recitation of the name of God), and *simā'* (gatherings of the Ṣūfis for musical performances)

1. A Vaiṣṇava *pada* of Saiyid Sulṭān; quoted by Enamul Huq: *S.P.P.* 1341 B. S. pp. 47-48.
2. Quoted by Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya: *Vāṅglār Vaiṣṇava Bhā-vāpanna Musalmān Kavī*, no. 94.
3. *Ofāte-Rasūl*, pp. 7-8 and *Shab-i-Mirāj*, quoted by Enamul Huq: *Muslim Vāṅglā Sāhitya*, p. 144 and *S.P.P.* 1341 B.S. p. 40, footnote 3 and p. 44.



have been regarded as the possible counterparts of *dashā*, *Kṛṣṇanāma* and *kīrtana* of *Gauḍīya* Vaiṣṇavism.<sup>1</sup> Again the strong pantheistic monotheism of Vaiṣṇavism, its stress on divine love or *prema* and its attitude to caste system, have also been attributed to Ṣūfī influences.<sup>2</sup> But it is very difficult to ascertain whether they indicate any causal connection or accidental similarity between the two systems of philosophy. It is due to these reasons that some scholars have tried to disprove the theory of Ṣūfistic influence on Vaiṣṇavism by pointing out the points of difference between the two and suggesting the influence of Buddhism, Jainism, Tantricism and Shiva cult on the Vaiṣṇava literature of the time.<sup>3</sup>

Without entering into this endless controversy, we may point out certain other facts to throw some light on this point. A careful study of the biographies of Chaitanya shows that he did not live with any Ṣūfī for a considerable period of time, nor did he come across any Islamic or Ṣūfī literature. He was born in an orthodox Brahmin family which does not seem to have had any contact with Islamic ideas and practices. Most of the biographies of Shri-Chaitanya show that the lives of his parents were characterized by an excessive amount of religious austerity which did not have any scope for Islamic influences. It is true that the life of Bengal was saturated with Ṣūfistic influences. How far Ṣūfī-ism could make itself felt at Navadvīpa, is undoubtedly a debatable point. As a matter of fact, Navadvīpa, the birth place of Shri-Chaitanya, was still retaining its position as an important centre of Sanskrit learning. It seems that Chaitanya was greatly influenced by the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*

1. Enamul Huq : *Vaṅge Svūfī Prabhāv*. pp. 165-70 ; also his unpublished thesis, *Ṣūfism in Bengal*.
2. Enamul Huq : *Vaṅge Svūfī Prabhāv*, pp. 171-78 ; also his unpublished thesis.
3. Sukumar Sen : *Vāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa*, 1, pp. 283-87 ; S. K. De : *Vaiṣṇava Faith* etc., pp. 21-22.

which contains prediction to the practice of *kīrtana*,<sup>1</sup> which was also performed by the Alvar saints of the South. Again the practice of singing and dancing was common with the Mawlawī Ṣūfī order of Jalāl-ud-dīn Rūmī<sup>2</sup> which does not appear to have gained any ground in medieval Bengal. The postulation of the influence of the *simāʿ* of the Mawlawī Ṣūfīs on the *kīrtana* of the Vaiṣṇavas, seems thus unwarrantable. Equally untenable is probably the view that the Sūfistic *hāl* had influenced the *kīrtana* of the Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavas, for some Indian saints used to attain the state of ecstasy in the course of their religious experiences. Mādhavendra Purī is said to have had occasional fainting fits due to the impact of Kṛṣṇite religion on his mind.<sup>3</sup> The recitation of the name of God was not anything new with the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal. The devotional recital of God's name is mentioned in the *Bhāgavat*.<sup>4</sup> Thus the *dhikr* of the Ṣūfīs does not appear to have had any influence on the Vaiṣṇavite religious practice, called *Kṛṣṇanāma*. The element of love is present in pre-Chaitanya Vaiṣṇavism also. God has been regarded as a Beloved in the *Bhāgavat*.<sup>5</sup> Pantheistic ideas are found so abundantly in the Upaniṣat that we have hardly any reason to trace them in Ṣūfī-ism. Among the points of difference between Ṣūfī-ism and Vaiṣṇavism, the absence of the female intermediary between God and the devotee in Ṣūfī-ism, is one. This intermediary agent is invariably present in Vaiṣṇavism. Monotheism does not appear to be the essential feature of Vaiṣṇavism, although it forms the cornerstone of Ṣūfistic belief. The Vaiṣṇavas conceive of a hierarchy of gods in which Kṛṣṇa is placed in the first and foremost position.<sup>6</sup> One may very well think that the attitude Chaitanya

1. The *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, quoted by S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, p. 169, f.n. 2.

2. See John A. Subhan : *op. cit.* p. 38.

3. *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, adi, viii, pp. 54-55.

4. Quoted by Sukumar Sen : *Vāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa*, I, p. 283.

5. *Ibid.*

6. S. K. De : *The Early History of Vaiṣṇava Faith etc.*, pp. 353 and 359.

took towards the caste system was probably influenced by Islamic social order. It is true that his religious emotionalism did not attach importance to caste rigidity ; but he does not seem to have tried to abolish it, nor did he introduce inter-dining and inter-marriage among the Hindus of various castes. Thus the influence of Sūfī-ism on the Vaiṣṇavism of Shri-Chaitanya is a point which is yet to be investigated.

It has been contended that Shri-Chaitanya checked the progress of Islām deliberately by converting a large number of Muslims to his creed.<sup>1</sup> The cases of Haridās, Bijuli Khān and the Muslim officer living at the Orissan frontier, are cited as examples in point. But we should not forget here that most of the Vaiṣṇava works were composed by the followers or devotees of Shri-Chaitanya who must have credited their Lord with the conversion of a number of Muslims. As a matter of fact, a study of the Vaiṣṇava works clearly shows that the achievements of Shri-Chaitanya have been greatly magnified. The great master's zealous adherents could hardly resist the temptation of showing that Vaiṣṇavism as propounded by Chaitanya was swallowing even a powerful religion like Islām. But large scale conversion of the Muslims could hardly be possible in those days when the Muslims were the political masters of the country. It is stated in the works like *Chaitanya-Charī-tāmṛta* and *Chaitanya-bhāgavat* that the *kīrtana* of Chaitanya had made deep impression on the minds of some of the Muslims who used to utter the name of *Hari* on seeing the Vaiṣṇavas dancing and singing.<sup>2</sup> Rationally interpreted, it means that the musical performances of the Vaiṣṇavas had evoked emotion in the minds of some of the Muslims who uttered *Harināma* only for the time being. It can hardly be believed that these Muslims embraced Vaiṣṇavism after having given up Islām for ever. We may mention in this connection the case of the Muslim tailor working at the house of Shrivāsa. Seeing

1. Enamul Huq : *Pūrva Pākistāne Islām*, pp. 112-17.

2. *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, antya, iv, p. 349 and v, p. 381.

the scene of *kīrtana*, he was moved to the point of madness.<sup>1</sup> But this seems to be rather a changing psychological state which had possibly no permanent duration. The life history of Haridās together with his conversion is shrouded in obscurity. *Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta* and *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, earlier works than *Advaita-prakāsha*, *Prema-Vilāsa* and *Bhakti-ratnākara*, nowhere mention that he was a Muslim by birth, subsequently converted to Vaiṣṇavism. How the stigma, *yavana*, came to be attached to his name, is not clearly known. It is quite likely that Haridās, a Hindu by birth, was brought up by a Muslim and was known as a *yavana*, as a result of his association with a Muslim family. As a matter of fact, this is what has been hinted at in the *Advaita-prakāsha* of Īshāna Nāgara.<sup>2</sup> The conversion of Haridās to Vaiṣṇavism does not appear to be identical with that of a Muslim to the Vaiṣṇava faith. Haridās is alleged to have converted numerous Muslims.<sup>3</sup> But the earlier and more reliable works like *Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta* and *Chaitanya-bhāgavat* which have described, at considerable length, the achievements of Haridās, are quite silent on this incident. The latter work has depicted him as a great saint with broad and liberal views. Even when cruelly oppressed by the Muslim *qāḍīs*, he says: "Listen, oh my children, all people have the one and the same God. The Hindus and the Muslims make difference only in His name. The Qur'ān and the Purāṇa aim at one Ultimate Reality. One faultless, indivisible, unending, eternal being fills up everybody's heart".<sup>4</sup> It seems quite unlikely that Haridās who had such broad, pantheistic views had converted Muslims to Vaiṣṇavism. The episodes connected with the conversion of Bijuli Khān and the Orissan frontier officer, already referred to, appear in the *Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta*<sup>5</sup> and

1. *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, ādi, xvii, p. 67.

2. *Op. cit.* ed. Mrinal Kanti Ghosh, 3rd ed. pp. 25 and 26.

3. *Ibid.* p. 35.

4. *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, ādi, xiv, p. 99.

5. *Op. cit.* madhya, xvi, p. 180 and xviii, p. 196.

have not been mentioned at all by Br̥ṇḍavanadās and other writers earlier than Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj. Although he has mentioned the sources of his information with regard to many incidents connected with the life of Shri-Chaitanya, Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj is silent on the sources of these stories. In the face of these difficulties, it is not at all safe to rely on the episodes of the conversion of Bijuli Khān and the frontier officer, narrated by the zealous Vaiṣṇava writer, Kṛṣṇadās. The number of the Muslims converted to Vaiṣṇavism, if there were any, must have been limited. Now, how to explain the conflicts between the Muslims and the Vaiṣṇavas, depicted in the literature of the time?<sup>1</sup> *Hari-saṁkīrtana* performed by the Vaiṣṇavas, seems to have been a new practice at Navadvīpa which attracted the attention of the people. There was a Brahminical reaction against it in the beginning.<sup>2</sup> When the Hindus of the place wanted to get it suppressed, with the help of the local Muslim officer,<sup>3</sup> the latter had to comply with their request not only to please them, but also to maintain peace and order in the city. When the *kīrtana* was opposed, the Vaiṣṇavas, in a furious mood of fanaticism, went to the extent of attacking the *qāqā* and burning his house.<sup>4</sup> Thus an analysis of the Muslim-Vaiṣṇava conflict shows that it did not involve any ideological or religious issue. If there is any religious tinge in it, it is simply because of the fact that the officer who had to deal with the situation was a Muslim, although he does not seem to have had any anti-Vaiṣṇava attitude. It must be mentioned that Shri-Chaitanya counteracted the liberal forces of Islām by admitting the people of all sects and castes to the fold of Vaiṣṇavism. The lower class people of the Hindu society whom Chaitanya converted, might have otherwise embraced Islām. Thus Vaiṣṇavism saved Hinduism from Islām.

1. *Chaitanya-charitāṁṛta*, ādi, xvii, pp 64-66; *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*: madhya, ii, p. 137, xxiii, pp. 266-67 and 274-77.
2. *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, ādi, xiv, p. 107.
3. *Ibid.* madhya, ii, p. 137 and viii, p. 176.
4. *Ibid.* madhya, xxiii, pp. 274-77.

It is true that Chaitanya-ism let loose certain socio-religious forces which seem to have jeopardized the influence of Islām in this country. As noticed above, the attitude of Shri-Chaitanya towards Islām was not probably hostile, nor does he seem to have had any genuine intention to direct his movement against it. But the post-Chaitanya Vaiṣṇavism which had become a militant church with proselytizing zeal, appears to have developed a contemptuous attitude towards Islām. The works of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, Jayānanda and Īshāna Nāgara all of whom flourished in the post-Chaitanya period, breathe a spirit of hostility and opposition to Islām. We may quote here what Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj has said about Islām: "Cow-slaughterers must have to suffer in eternal hell-fire for the sins they have committed. The maker of your (Muslims') *shāstra* has been misled, for he has enunciated these principles (those of cow-slaughtering and others) without knowing their essence ..... As this *shāstra* is modern, it cannot stand the test of logic".<sup>1</sup> Such a bitterness against Islām could hardly be found among the Vaiṣṇavas so long as Chaitanya was alive. The same work states that he was converting the Muslims in order to raise them from the depth of degradation into which they had fallen.<sup>2</sup> Similar ideas are expressed in the *Advaita-prakāsha* of Īshāna Nāgara. To quote only one passage: "The *shāstra* of the Muslims is against reason. Those who follow that *shāstra* are known as *yavanas*. The omnipresent Supreme Being is without any beginning. His body is full of six virtues, pure and *satvamaya* (or possessing the quality of goodness). The study of the *shāstra* which regards Him as mild and shapeless, leads to the increase of *māyā* (illusion) and *moha* (delusion)".<sup>3</sup> It will be futile to quote similar other passages from the works produced in the post-Chaitanya period. Suffice it to say that

1. *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, ādi, xvii, p. 65.

2. *Ibid.* ādi, viii, p. 38 and madhya, i, p. 76.

3. *Op. cit.* p. 36; see also pp. 15-16, 25-26, 35, 39 and 75 of the same work. The genuineness of the works like *Prema-vilāsa* and *Advaita-prakāsha* are very often doubted; see Sukumar Sen:

Islamic influences on Hindu society have been deplored by almost all Vaiṣṇava poets of the time.

Various causes may be attributed to the hostile attitude of the Vaiṣṇavas belonging to the post-Chaitanya period. The Husain Shāhī period had already come to an end and the Mughal rule was being established in the country. The Husain Shāhī rule represented the national aspirations of the people not excluding the Hindus and the Vaiṣṇavas who seem to have received much religious tolerance from the ruling class. But the Mughal rule appears to have presented a sad contrast in this respect, for it had little connection with the people. This explains why Muslim rule is regarded as the root of all evils in a passage of the *Prema-vilāsa*.<sup>1</sup> Islām which was making rapid progress in the country was taking away a large number of people from the fold of Hinduism. Muslim influences on the Hindu society were quite perceptible. The foreign rule and creed with its manifold impact on the life of Bengal could hardly be tolerated. All these seem to have produced a powerful reaction against Islām.

#### IV

The Dharma cult seems to have developed passive sympathy for Islām, possibly, under the pressure of the Brahminical persecution it suffered in those days. It is very often maintained that there are palpable Islamic influences on the Dharma cult.<sup>2</sup>

*Vāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa*, I, pp. 276 and 408. Biman Bihari Majumdar : *op. cit.* pp. 446-58 and 507-14. Some of the details about the life of Chaitanya as found in these works may not find corroboration in the reliable works on the subject and portions of them may even be spurious. But the Vaiṣṇava attitude to Islām as depicted in them does not fundamentally differ from that found in the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāj.

1. Nityānandadāsa : *op. cit.* ch. I.
2. M. Shahidullah : Introduction to the *Shūnya-Purāṇa* : *op. cit.* pp. 12-13 and 36-38 ; S. B. Das Gupta : *Obscure Religious Cults*, pp. 266-67.

Such a conclusion may be taken only in a qualified sense. The idea of the shapeless God of Islām is not in any way similar to the *Shūnyavād* in the Dharmite faith. *Shūnyavād* is negative in essence but the Islamic idea of Godhead is quite positive. Monotheism is the cardinal point in Islām ; but it is not so in the Dharmite cult, recognizing as it does the different gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. In the *sṛṣṭi-pattana* of the *Shūnya-Purāṇa*, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Shiva and Ādyā Shakti or Pārvati, have been duly recognized.<sup>1</sup> Thus Islamic theology does not seem to have influenced the philosophy of the Dharmites of Bengal. Muslim influences on the followers of the Dharma cult, if there were any, appear to have been limited to the field of their habits and customs some of which probably became intermingled with Muslim practices. Slaughtering animals according to the Muslim custom and reverence for the western direction are noticed in the *Dharma-pūjā-vidhāna*. Sometimes the Dharmites regarded the sultān of Gauḍ as Dharma personified.<sup>2</sup> Some of the Muslim poets have used the Dharmite terminology in their works. Thus the shapeless God of Islām has become identical with the *Nirāñjana* of the Dharma cult.<sup>3</sup> All these presuppose certain understanding between the Muslims and the followers of the Dharma cult in the social sphere about which detailed information is not available. The latter appears to have turned friendly to the Muslims due to the hostile treatment they received from the Brahmins.

That they were persecuted by the Brahminical section, is borne out by the following passage of the *Shūnya-Purāṇa* : "There are in Jājapura sixteen hundred Vedic Brahmins who are, in reality, tyrannical people, and not Vedic Brahmins. They go out in search of *dakṣiṇā* (sacrificial fees offered to the Brahmins) ; if they do not get it, they burn the houses of the people by cursing them... Making a common cause against

1. *Op. cit.* pp. 36-38.

2. *Dharma-pūjā-vidhāna*, pp. 215 and 219.

3. M. Shahidullah's Introduction : *op. cit.* p. 13.



the *Saddharmīs*, these powerful people persecute them. Reciting verses from the Vedas, they move about like fire striking terror into the minds of the people. In their utter despair, people pray to Dharma for help. Thus the Brahmins destroy creation doing much injustice to the people. Dharma who is in Heaven becomes aggrieved and surrounds himself with the darkness of *māyā* or illusion.”<sup>1</sup> Then the poet narrates how Dharma, in the guise of the *yavana*, destroyed the Brahmins by attacking Jājapura.<sup>2</sup> Stripped of its legendary veil, the story shows how the followers of the Dharma cult were being mercilessly oppressed by the Brahmins. Long afterwards, Māṇik Gāṅgulī hesitated to write poems on the Dharma cult lest he should be persecuted.<sup>3</sup> Probably because of the revival of Brahminism, the followers of the Dharma cult had to live in a state of chronic fear and began to adopt certain precautionary measures of self-protection. Whenever anybody went to the temple to worship Dharma, the priest used to put certain intelligent questions to him which were as follows : “Let my hand and feet be as hard as iron. Let the enemy go to hell. Where is your house ? Which god do you worship ? Which deity do you meditate on ? Which god do you adore ? Which direction do you say your prayers in ? Which Vedas do you read ?

Where have you got the copper bracelets (that you put on) ? Let me know the origin of copper.”<sup>4</sup> Answer to these questions were as follows : “I live on the bank of the Vallukā. I adore the shapeless God, meditate on the *Shūnya-mūrti* (image of the Void), and worship figurate God. I say my prayers facing the west and read the fifth Veda .. This copper has

1. *Op. cit.* pp. 232-33.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 233-35. The Muslim attack on Jājapura in Orissa mentioned in the *Nirañjaner Usmā* in the *Shūnya-Purāṇa* may be identified with the Orissan expeditions of Husain Shah in the course of which he is said to have destroyed a number of temples and deities ; *supra.* ch. II, pp. 49-50.

3. Māṇik Gāṅgulī : *Dharma Maṅgala*, p. 9.

4. *Dharma-pūjā-vidhāna*, p. 165.

been made by Vishvakarmā".<sup>1</sup> When the devotee was thus in a position to satisfy the Dharma priest, by answering his questions properly, the priest could easily take him to be a follower of the Dharma cult. Thus we find that the Dharmites had to resign themselves to an obscure existence possibly under the pressure of Brahminical persecution. Under these circumstances, it was quite natural that they would like to take help from the Muslims. When they found that the Muslims had attacked Jājapura, they regarded it as an outburst of the anger of Dharma against the Brahmins. The advent of the Muslims seems to have given them a sense of relief. Thus the Dharmites had good reasons to recognize tacitly the prophets and religious personalities of Islām. In the *Shūnya-Purāṇa*, Muḥammad, Adam, Eve and Fāṭimah have been identified with Brahmā, Shiva, Chaṇḍī and Padmāvatī respectively and Islamic terminology has been used with facility.<sup>2</sup> The Dharmite liturgical text, *Dharma-pñjā-vidhāna*, contains a section called *kālimā-jāllāla*<sup>3</sup>, which, besides giving a description of the Muslim attack on Orissa (also narrated in the *Shūnya-Purāṇa*), identifies a Muslim Khandkar with Dharma Ṭhākura who is made to settle Hindu-Muslim disputes. He is depicted as a Muslim judge, dressed in Muslim dress, adopting Muslim customs and taking whatever food is taken by a Muslim. An analysis of the *kālimā-jāllāla* shows that the Dharmites did not have any aversion to the Muslim society of the time. How the Muslims responded to this attitude of the Dharmites is not clearly known. But the fact that some of the Muslim poets of medieval Bengal used Dharmite terms quite unhesitatingly, goes to indicate Dharmite influences on the Muslims.

## V

We have suggested that the conflict between Shaivism and

1. *Ibid.* p. 165.

2. *Shūnya-Purāṇa*, pp. 235-36.

3. *Op. cit.* pp. 219-24.

the local cults of Manasā, Chāṇḍī and Dharma, which had been going on for centuries, ultimately ended in a synthesis of Brahminical culture with local, hieratic ideas as a result of which the scope of the Hindu pantheon was broadened.<sup>1</sup> From what we have discussed above, it follows that a regular process of religious blending was going on side by side with conflict between Islām and Brahminism that took place in the period in question. Islām was influenced not only by the Hindu Yoga philosophy, but also by the Tantric physiology of *Ṣaṭchakrabhedha* or the penetration of the six mystical circles in the body. As a matter of fact, Islamic mysticism, flourishing as it did in an atmosphere saturated with Yogic-tantric ideas, could hardly be immune from the influence of such a body of local ideas. Islām was sympathetic not only to the Dharma cult, but also possibly to the Nātha religion on which Muslims used to sing songs and compose poems in those days. This is illustrated by the fact that the *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, a famous work on the Nātha cult, is very often ascribed to a Muslim poet named Faiḍullāh. The gulf that existed between the Brahminical culture and local Hinduism, must have retarded the natural growth of the Hindu society. With the introduction of alien rule, a realignment of socio-religious forces, seems to have taken place. The Muslim rulers appear to have brought the culture of the people to the fore-ground by giving patronage to the vernacular language. The local gods and goddesses, which had gone to the background, could now make their influence felt through vernacular literature.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the self-centred nature of the Brahminical group of people and their direct hostility to this local culture, the Dharmites, Buddhists, Nāthapanthis and other groups of so-called non-Aryan people must have sought the protection of the Muslims. That is what seems to have been hinted at in the *Nirañjaner Uṣmā* cited above. The orthodox Sunnī Islām does not seem to have given recognition to these local ideas ; but its mystic aspect represented by liberal Ṣūfī-ism did

1. *Infra.* ch. vii.

2. For an elaboration of this point, see ch. vii of this work.

not hesitate to reconcile itself to the local hieratic forces. Hence the impact of yogic-tantric philosophy on the writings of the mystic poets like Saiyid Sulṭān, ‘Alī Riḍā and Faiḍullāh. As a matter of fact, Ṣūfī-ism of Bengal had much affinity with these local mystic ideas.

As noticed above, the movement of Shri-Chaitanya appears to have brought about a synthesis of the conflicting forces that were at work in the body of the Hindu society. In doing so, it seems to have affected the progress of Islām to a considerable extent.

## CHAPTER VII

### *LITERATURE AND CULTURE*

THE period in question witnessed intense literary activities which were quite unparalleled in those days. The medium was both Sanskrit, the vehicle of Brahminical culture and the vernacular language which appears to have attained a definite form quite capable of giving expression to the religious and secular ideas of the people. Although frowned upon by the Hindus of the higher social strata, Bengali began to enjoy certain advantages which Sanskrit and Persian could not. Since the conquest of Bengal by the Muslims, Sanskrit had been losing its ground because of the decline of Brahminism as a culture. It had eventually to yield a place to the vernacular tongue which had Sanskrit for its grand father and Māgadhī Prākṛt for its father. An imperceptible conflict was going on between the Brahminical culture and the local ideology even in pre-Muslim Bengal. The growth of Bengali language and the birth of Bengali literature symbolized the triumph of the native culture over the Brahminical one. The Ḥusain Shāhī period marks the culmination of this socio-logical process. In the Mughal period, the vernacular language greatly helped Brahminism in transforming itself when it felt the necessity of entertaining the new set of socio-religious ideals bred in the bones of the nation. Persian which was closely

connected with the life of the court, does not seem to have had any direct impact on the ordinary people, nor could it produce literature of any importance in our period.

# I

While studying the history of Bengali literature, one should not underestimate the contributions of the Muslim rulers to its growth and development. Literary activities could be hardly possible in the thirteenth century due to the unsettled social and political conditions which followed in the wake of the Muslim conquest. The history of Bengali literature begins with the establishment of the political independence of Bengal under the *Ilyās Shāhī* rulers who restored peace and prosperity to this country in the middle of the fourteenth century. *Chandīdāsa Kṛttivāsa* and *Mālādhara Vasu*, who flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, paved the way for further development in the field of literature by composing poems in Bengali and translating Sanskrit works into it. The process which was already at work continued in the *Iḥusain Shāhī* period when the vernacular literature received a new lease of life. The rulers of this period took an active interest in the growing indigenous literature by patronizing some of the poets of the time. They seem to have been actuated by political considerations to come in close contact with the people. It was almost impossible for them to build up a good system of administration without knowing the socio-religious ideas and tradition of the people they wanted to govern. So the question of rendering patronage to their language and literature arose. There were other reasons too. Bengal held a politically precarious position in the face of the hostilities of the powers surrounding her, against whom the *Iḥusain Shāhī* rulers were fighting almost simultaneously. They could hardly expect military success without having won the sympathy and support of the subjects, for internal stability was a necessary pre-requisite of a sound foreign policy or a successful warfare. It should be remembered here that the *Iḥusainī* rulers, though of Arabian origin, did not have any direct

connection with their homeland. They could not foster any Arabian culture on the soil of Bengal separated by thousands of miles from Arabia. The Arab merchants who used to come to Bengal from time to time, did not stay here permanently to enrich such a culture. Thus the ruling class had to forget its foreign origin and associate itself closely with the local culture. Again the growing influence of the local culture, already noticed by us, greatly accelerated the process of the growth of the vernacular language. Brahminism, which was already shorn of political power, had hardly any reason to be friendly to the Muslim ruling class. It seems that the sultāns wanted to check it by tacitly recognizing the culture which stood in opposition to Brahminism. Contemporary Bengali sources would have us believe that the rulers and governors of the time used to listen to the *paurāṇik* stories and legends recited by the court poets.<sup>1</sup> Of the Bengali poets of the period, Yashorāj Khān, Kavindra Parameshvara, Shrikara Nandi and Shridhara received direct court patronage. Vijaya Gupta and Vipradās, both of whom composed verses on the story of the snake-cult, have not failed to admire Husain Shāh, although they do not appear to have received any patronage from the court.<sup>2</sup> The sultāns who were Bengalized because of their close association with the people, gave status and dignity to Bengali language which now began to play the role that was played by Sanskrit in pre-Muslim Bengal.

The poetry which was produced in this period had at least five varieties in so far as its themes were concerned. These were (a) the poems dealing with the snake cult, (b) the versified translation of the *Mahābhārat*, (c) the Vaiṣṇava *Padavalī*, (d) a poem on yoga philosophy and (e) romantic poems represented by the *Vidyā-Sundara* of Shridhara. A careful analysis of each of these types is necessary.

1. We have elaborately discussed this point in a subsequent section of this chapter.
2. *Infra*.

## I (a)

One of the local deities of this period was Manasā who seems to have originated even before the Muslim conquest of Bengal. She was an anti-Brahminic and non-Aryan goddess worshipped by those who belonged to the lower rung of the social ladder, and subsequently recognized by the higher class people. The songs which were composed about her in the remote past and which were in oral circulation among the people, were compiled and given a proper shape by the poets of our period and these poems again began to be sung by the professional singers of the rural society. This is why, the *rāgās* in which they were to be sung, have been mentioned in these poems. It may be mentioned here that the poets who composed verses on the Manasā cult were simply catering to the needs of the time without being influenced by any literary motive. Dinesh Chandra Sen has tried to assess the influence of Islām on the local cults including Manasā. He says, "The Mahammadans with their vigorous living faith, had by this time come to Bengal. Their Koran which they believed to be inspired, lays it down that the God of Islam helps believers and destroys unbelievers. The strong belief of Islam in a personal God had to be counteracted in this country by forms of religion in which the personal element of divinity predominated. So the Śākta and the Vaiṣṇava religions flourished and the Śaiva religion with its impersonal ideal and mysticism in which man rose to the level of his God in the Advaitabāda was gradually thrown into the background, as the masses did not comprehend its speculative feature".<sup>1</sup> But such a conclusion seems unwarranted. The cults of Manasā and Chāṇḍī would have grown in power and influence even without the presence of the living God of Islām in this country. The passive, abstract and impersonal God, as represented by Shaivism, could hardly fulfil the hankering of the minds of the people who are generally apt to depend on a personal God capable of

1. D. C. Sen : *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, pp. 237-38.



evoking the deepest sentiment in popular minds. The emergence of the personalities of Manasā and Chāṇḍī in Bengal is perhaps largely due to this human psychology and not to Islamic influences as contended by the much lamented scholar. This psychology was responsible for the reaction of the local culture against the mystic culture of Brahminism or Shaivism.

The two poets who composed poems on the snake cult are Vijaya Gupta and Vipradās. The story narrated by them may be summarized in the following lines : Manasā, who was born mysteriously, was the daughter of Shiva. The latter kept her concealed, in the beginning, at his own residence, until his wife Chāṇḍī, found her out. Manasā was married to a saint named Jagatkāru. Frustrated in his conjugal life, Jagatkāru, however, went away to spend his life in meditation and penance. It was the step-motherly jealousy of Chāṇḍī which compelled Shiva to banish his daughter to Jayantīnagar where Vishvakarmā, the legendary architect, constructed a house for her accommodation. Now Manasā wanted the people to worship her as the goddess of snakes and soon she was recognized and worshipped by the lower classes as such. Her attendant and friend, Netravatī or Netāi helped her a great deal in spreading her worship among the people. Hasan and Husain who prevented the cow-keepers from worshipping Manasā, were severely penalized by her. The serpent goddess had an altercation with Chandradhara, a famous merchant of Champakanagar, who had refused to worship her. As a result of this, Chāṇḍ lost every thing including his six children. In course of the sea-voyages which he undertook, Chāṇḍ was reduced to a miserable plight, the calamity being largely the outcome of Manasā's anger. His youngest son, Lakṣmīndar, who had married Behulā, died of snake-bite on the night following the marriage. The grief of Sonekā, Chāṇḍ's wife, knew no bounds. While the husband was a worshipper of Shiva, the wife was a devotee of Manasā. Undaunted, Chāṇḍ went on, even under these straitened circumstances, refusing to acknowledge her as a goddess. Having passed through a number of ordeals, Behulā went to Kailāspurī, enchanted Shiva and Pārvatī by her wonderful

dance and got back the life of her husband. Chastened by the miseries he had gone through, Chānd began to worship Manasā. By the mercy of the serpent goddess, he got back all his children whom he had lost in the wake of his quarrel with Manasā. Lakṣmīndar, accompanied by Behulā, went to heaven. Chānd also followed them.<sup>1</sup>

1. The *Manasā-maṅgal* of Vijaya Gupta was composed in 1416 Shaka=1494-95, when Ḥusain Shāh was the sulṭān of Gaud. The date mentioned in the *Manasā-maṅgal* of Vijaya Gupta edited by Basanta Kumar Bhattacharya is 1407 Shaka=1485 A.D., 3rd ed. p. 4. This is obviously a mistake, for Ḥusain Shāh, eulogized by the poet, was not the ruler of Bengal in that year. The date 1416 Shaka found in a manuscript, which Stapleton came across, seems quite correct; D. C. Sen : *Vaṅga Bhāṣā O Sāhitya*, pp. 111-12, f.n. In the introductory section of his work, the poet has mentioned that he lived in the village of Phullashrī, the abode of scholars, situated in the *taqsim* of Baṅgroḍā included in Fatḥābād division of the kingdom of Gaud over which Ḥusain Shāh, the *tilak*-mark of kings, was ruling; *Vaṅga Bhāṣā O Sāhitya*, pp. 111-12; *Manasā-maṅgal*, p. 4. This village may be identified with the village, Phullashrī of modern Barisal district. A modern scholar has doubted the authenticity of this work on the following grounds: (a) since Vijaya Gupta composed his poems immediately after the accession of Ḥusain to the throne of Gaud, the poet could hardly regard him as *nṛpatitilaka* from Vaṅga separated from Gaud by a vast distance; (b) secondly, the language of the *Manasā-maṅgal* of this poet is comparatively modern and no genuine manuscript containing the date 1416 Shaka which is said to have been the date of its composition, is available. Although the questions raised by the learned scholar appear to be pertinent, they can be easily answered. According to an inscription, Barisal, the district of our poet, formed an integral part of the kingdom of Gaud as early at least as 870 A.H./1465-66 A.D. when a mosque was constructed at Mirganj in the same district by one Ajiāl Khān. *J.A.S.B.* 1860, p. 407. So it is crystal clear that this district was well-connected with Gaud by the time when Vijaya Gupta wrote his *Manasā-maṅgal*. Moreover, Ḥusain Khān had already left his impression on the pages

The *Manasā-vijaya* of Vipradās was composed in 1495-96, also in the reign of Husain Shāh who has been regarded by

of the history of Bengal as the minister of Shāms-ud-dīn Muẓaffar Shāh. In these political circumstances, the news of his accession must have been noised about throughout the different regions of the kingdom of Gauḍ. As to the linguistic aspect of the work, it has undergone much interpolation and alteration at the hands of the different copyists and on the lips of numerous singers. The linguistic adulteration which one comes across in this work speaks of its popularity and wide circulation in East Bengal. The singers, who used it for musical purposes, seem to have changed its language from time to time. But why should we level this charge against the *Manasā-maṅgal* of Vijaya Gupta only? The famous works of Chaṇḍīdāsa, Kṛtīvāsa and Bīṇḍavanadās are not exceptions to this general misfortune. Although the language of this work has undergone considerable change, its theme remains intact, for the story it has embodied, tallies in essential points with that found in the *Manasā-vijaya* of Vipradās whose work is genuine and is one of the earliest works on the snake cult. The charge that the date 1416 Shaka is found in no manuscript is without any real foundation. Stapleton found in the village of Gailā adjacent to Phullashrī, an old manuscript containing the following lines : *ṛtu shashī veda shashī parimita shaka. sultān husen sāh mpatī-tilaka*; D. C. Sen : *Vaṅga Bhāṣā O Sāhitya*, p. 112, f n. It has been recently held that Vijaya Gupta wrote his poem in the reign of Jalāl-ud-dīn Fath Shāh, for the date 1406 Shaka/1484-85 A.D., found in the printed editions of the poem, falls within the period of that sultān and some of the coins of the ruler bear the expression "Husain Shāhī" indicating that he had the popular name Husain Shāh; S. Mukhopadhyay : *op. cit.* pp. 127-28. It is difficult to believe that the sultān was known by his popular name in the regions far away from his own locality. People of the neighbourhood of Gauḍ could know the ruler's familiar name not so much heard of by the men of distant regions. Moreover, we are told by D. C. Sen that the old manuscripts of the book are all dated in 1416 Shaka/1494-95; *Vaṅgabhāṣā O Sāhitya*, pp. 111-12. Stapleton's discovery of the manuscript having the same date, in Gailā, adjacent to the home of Vijaya Gupta, is of more than

the poet as "an auspicious sign in Gaud".<sup>1</sup>

The story narrated in these works shows how the worship of Manasā was spreading among the different sections of the people. Although this cult was opposed in the beginning by the higher class people, they finally had to bend low before it. This is what is symbolized by the Chānd-vene episode. Manasā was most probably a goddess of indigenous origin and it is quite natural that the Brahminical section disliked this vulgar cult as they called it. The whole story gives the picture of conflict between Shaivism and the local cult of Manasā and shows how the former was gradually being overpowered by the latter. Manasā cannot be satisfied until she is worshipped by Chānd Sadāgar, originally a devotee of Shiva. Manasā is all the while active and does not hesitate to adopt even barbarous measures to force Chānd into worshipping her. But Shiva is inactive and inert and does not come forward to save the life of his devotee. The local cults were again contending with one another with a view to establishing their respective supremacy in the Bengali society. This is what is clearly indicated by the scenes of conflict between Chāṇḍī and Manasā depicted so frequently in the poems of the period.

Thus it is evident that the *Manasā-maṅgals* have preserved certain salient features of the social history of this country. Although the story they tell is of a legendary nature, significant historical information may be gleaned from it. They refer

usual interest. The manuscript found in the village of the poet or in the neighbourhood, is likely to have preserved the original date and composition. A notice of the Gailā manuscript appeared in the *Dacca Review*, March, 1913, p. 457. So the two lines quoted above indicate that the poem under consideration was composed in 1494-95 A.D. in the reign of Husain Shāh.

1. The *Manasā-vijaya* has been edited by Sukumar Sen from the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1953. For the references to the date of its composition and to the reign of Husain Shāh, see p. 3 of this edition.

to the various tendencies of the age and bring home to us the different aspects of the fifteenth or sixteenth-century Bengali life.

Although no work is known to have been composed on the cults of Chaṇḍī, Dharma and Nātha in the period under discussion, it must not be inferred that these were absent in Bengal. In fact, each of these local cults was crystallizing in pre-Mughal Bengal. It has been stated in the *Manasa-vijaya* of Vipradās that Shiva had to meditate on the white Nirañjana, Dharma Thākur, for about twelve years, who was regarded by other gods of the Hindu pantheon as Supreme Being or *Parama Brahmā*.<sup>1</sup> Rationally interpreted, it means that people used to attach much importance to the Dharma cult which superseded the Shiva cult. Br̥ṇḍāvanadās, writing in the third quarter of the sixteenth century, had sufficient reason to deplore the impact of the Chaṇḍī cult on the Hindu society of Navadvīpa.<sup>2</sup> The Nāthapanthis were so numerous that they could easily attract the notice of Quṭban who is said to have composed the *Mṛgāvat* in Bhāgalpur.<sup>3</sup> We have already mentioned that almost all of these cults opposed Brahminism to a considerable extent. Most of the *Chaṇḍī-maṅgal* poems, composed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, abound in scenes of conflict between Shaivism and the Chaṇḍī cult.

In these works, Chaṇḍī is depicted as showering her favour on those who worship her and chastising those into obedience who refuse to follow her.<sup>4</sup> It is clearly stated in the con-

1. *Op. cit.* pp. 5-6.

2. *Op. cit.* adi, I, p. 11 and madhya, XIII, p. 210.

3. *Infra.* p. 254 ff.; see extracts from the *Mṛgāvat* of Quṭban, published in *J.B.R.S.* 1955, Dec., XLI, pt. IV, p. 475.

4. Kālaketu who worshipped Chaṇḍī was amply rewarded by the goddess. Through the mercy of Chaṇḍī, he got enough wealth and the kingdom of Gujrat. Though defeated and imprisoned by the ruler of Kaliṅga, he was released by the latter as a result of the intervention of Chaṇḍī. For the story of Kālaketu, see *Kavikaṅkan-chaṇḍī*, pt. I. The story appears in other *Maṅgal*

temporary sources that Shiva was being regularly worshipped long before the acceptance of Chāṇḍī as a goddess by the people. The supremacy of Shiva could hardly be tolerated by Chāṇḍī who was now out to assert herself. Manasā and Chāṇḍī seem to have been non-Brahminic and non-Aryan goddesses and their victory, as elaborated in the *māṅgal* poems, may be rightly regarded as the victory of the culture of the non-Aryan people of Bengal who appear to have led an obscure existence under the Brahminical influence in pre-Muslim Bengal. We have no reason to believe that the influence of these local cults was limited to the lower class people. In fact, there was a regular process of filtration of lower class socio-religious ideas to the upper class Brahminical circle. Mukandaram Chakravati and Mādhava Āchārya who composed poems on the Chāṇḍī cult, towards the end of the sixteenth century, Māṇik Gāṅguli, Rūparām Chakravati and Khelārām Chakravati, who wrote on the Dharma cult in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were Brahmins. Thus in the course of the adaptation of Brahminism to the changing circumstances, the local cults of Manasā, Chāṇḍī and Dharma could find suitable places for themselves in the Hindu pantheon. The Aryan god Shiva was now brought down to the level of an average Bengali agriculturist as depicted in the *Shivāyana* of Rāmeshvara Bhaṭṭāchārya. In the course of this transformation, Brahminism lost much of its original rigidity and received a new meaning. It could thus come very close to the minds of the ordinary people. This socio-religious evolution could take place in the course of several centuries. But we find the beginning of this process in the fifteenth century or even earlier. While Halāyudha Mishra has mentioned the worship of Chāṇḍī in his *Brāhmaṇa Sarvasva*, Govindānanda has descri-

poems as well. While Dhanapati was a devotee of Shiva, his wife Khullanā used to worship Chāṇḍī whom her husband insulted on the eve of his leaving for Ceylon. He was subjected to much hardship by Chāṇḍī and compelled to worship her ultimately ; *ibid.* pt. II.

bed the rituals of the Manasā cult in his *Smṛti* text.<sup>1</sup> If the *Chaitanaya-bhāgavat* is to be relied upon,<sup>2</sup> some of the Brahmins of Navadvīpa had become the priests of Manasā and Chāṇḍī with a view to earning a descent livelihood. Thus it seems evident that under the pressure of economic needs, some of the Brahmins were giving recognition to the popular local cults. Bengali literature had its growth and development through the process of sociological conflict and compromise, noticed above.

### I (b)

Of the translators of the *Mahābhārata* into Bengali, the names of Kavindra Parameshvara and Shrikara Nandī stand out predominantly. The former was patronized by Parāgal Khān, and the latter by his son, Chhuṭi Khān, both father and son being the governors of Chittagong under Husain Shāh. Both of the poets<sup>3</sup> have profusely eulogized their patrons in the introductory sections of their works.

1. Sukumar Sen : *Madhya Yuger Vāṅglā O Vāṅgālī*, p. 37.
2. *Op. cit.* adi. ch. x, p. 72.
3. Sometimes Shrikara Nandī's *Ashvamedha Parva* is attributed to Kavindra Parameshvara. But this is done on a very weak ground. Out of the numerous *bhaṇitās* appearing in the *Ashvamedha Parva* published from the *Vaṅgiya Sāhitya Parisad*, only two or three contain the name of Kavindra and the rest uniformly mention Shrikara Nandī : *op. cit.* pp. 63, 139 and 140. In these two or three *bhaṇitā*'s also, the name of Kavindra has been mentioned together with that of Parāgal Khān. It seems that Shrikara Nandī has thus reasonably referred to his contemporary poet, Kavindra and his patron, Parāgal Khān, for he was following the footsteps of Kavindra by translating the *Ashvamedha Parva* into Bengali. One may confuse Shrikara Nandī with Kavindra ; but Chhuṭi Khān, the patron of Shrikara Nandī, can hardly be confused with Parāgal who was Kavindra's patron. Shrikara Nandī has repeatedly mentioned that Chhuṭi Khān was his patron ; but he has never said so about Parāgal Khān. Thus it seems fairly well-established that Kavindra and Shrikara Nandī

The story of the *Mahābhārat* which appeared in Bengali language through the Sanskrit version of Jaiminī, seems to have enjoyed much popularity among the people of Bengal. When Parāgal Khān and Chhuṭi Khān ordered the epic to be translated into the vernacular language, they simply gave expression to the intellectual demand of the people. Before the composition of poems by Saiyid Sultān on the legends of Islām as embodied in the *Navī-vaṃsha*, the *Mahābhārat* of Kavindra had captured the minds of the Muslim population so much so that the former clearly states that he has written on Islamic themes with a view to diverting the Muslim mind from the *Bhāratakathā* of the latter.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Muslim poet wanted to present his *Navī-vaṃsha* to the society as a counterpart of the *Parāgali Mahābhārat*. Viewed in the light of these circumstances, Abdul Karim Sāhitya Vishārād's conjecture that the celebrated Muslim governor, Parāgal Khān wrote poems on the *Mahābhārat* theme,<sup>2</sup> deserves proper consideration. The Bengalized versions of the *Mahābhārat* mark, once again, the victory of the *laukik* culture already referred to by us.

Of the few writers of *Vaiṣṇava padas*, belonging to the period in question, Yashorāj Khān who is said to have served as an official of Ḥusain Shāh, has become immortal. A *Brajavuli* poem of Yashorāj which has appeared in the *Rasa-mañjarī* of Pītāmvaradās<sup>3</sup> breathes a spirit of tenderness and delicacy of an unapproachable excellence. This may be regarded

were two different persons who composed two different works in the reign of Ḥusain Shāh. Had they been identical with each other, the name of Shrikara Nandī would have appeared also in the *Parāgali Mahābhārat* which was written by Kavindra.

1. Saiyid Sultān: *Shab-i-Mirāj*, quoted by Enamul Huq: *Muslim Vaṅglā Sāhitya*, p. 144.
2. Sāhitya Vishārād has quoted a poem on a *Mahābhārat* theme, containing a *bhaṇitā* of Parāgal Khān; *Vaṅglā Prācchin Puthir Vivaraṇa*, pt. 1, vol. 1, pp. 10-12.
3. *S.P.P.* 1306 B.S. p. 8.



as one of the finest examples of the *Brajavuli padas* written in medieval Bengal.

A similar *pada* containing the *bhāṇitā* of Sheikh Kabīr has come down to us. The translation of this poem into any foreign language cannot preserve the softness and elegance of the original. We quote it below with a somewhat free English translation.<sup>1</sup>

1. *dhanāshi (velāveli) shrirādhār rūpa  
aki aparūpa rūpera ramanī dhani dhani '  
chalite pekhala gajarāja gamanī dhani dhani ' dhu '  
kājale rañjita dhani nayāna dhavala bhāle '  
bhramorā bholala vimala kamala dale '  
gumāna nā kara dhani khina ati mājākhāni '  
kuchagiri phalera bhāre bhāngi paḍiva yauvani '  
sundari chāndamukhi vachana volasi hāsi '  
amiā varikhe jalchhe shūrada pūraṇa shashi '  
sekha kavire bhaye ahi guṇa pāmāre jāne '  
chhulāṇa nachhira sāhā bhulicche kamala vane.*

What a wonderful beauty the maiden possesses !  
Her movement is as slow as that of an elephant.  
Her collyrium-coloured eyes on the white forehead  
Look like bees in a beautiful lotus-garden.  
She is devoid of pride and her waist is thin.  
Her youth will bend down under the pressure of her breast.  
The beautiful maiden possessing a moon-like face  
speaks smiling.  
Like the full autumnal moon, it pours nectar.

this goodness

Shāikh Kabīr says that his humble self appreciates  
And sulṭān Naṣīr Shāh is wandering in the lotus garden.

See *S.P.P.* 1344 B.S., pp. 22-23, for this Bengali *pada*. For a slightly different reading of the text, cf. *Muslim Kāvīr Pada-Sāhitya*, ed. Ahmad Sharif, p. 46, no. 24. We are in favour of ascribing this poem to the early sixteenth century for reasons more than one. The concluding line of the poem contains the name of Nāṣir Shāh who is undoubtedly identical with Nāṣir-ud-dīn Nuṣrat Shāh (1519-32 A.D.). Kāvī Shekhara also known as

The name Shaiḥ Kabīr indicates that he was a Muslim poet. Although the details about his life are not known, it seems that he was intimately connected with sultān Nuṣrat Shāh. Like Yashorāj Khān, he might have been an officer of Nuṣrat Shāh. Thus the Muslims were making contributions to Bengali language and literature. Down to the fifteenth century, their literary activities do not seem to have assumed any significant importance possibly because of the socio-political circumstances under which they were placed. The Muslim foreigners who were settling here were gradually being Bengalized and the native people who were converted to Islām were probably adjusting themselves to the new conditions. This sociological process must have taken a long time during which the Bengali Muslims had tried to reconcile themselves to the changed circumstances. This seems to explain the comparative insignificance of Muslim Bengali literature which we notice down to the end of the fifteenth century.

#### I(d)

*Yoga* philosophy is represented by the *Ādya Parichaya* composed, as its introductory section indicates, in 1420 Shaka/

Chhoṭa Vidyāpati, who was a contemporary of Nuṣrat Shāh, has called the latter Nāsir Shāh in another *pada*, quoted by Sukumar Sen : *Vāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa*, I, p. 73. Again the different *bhaṇitās* given by Shridhara in his *Vidyā-Sundara* shows that Nuṣrat was known as Nāsir Shāh whose son was Firūz Shāh. Thus it is evident that Nuṣrat was very often called by his *jalūs* name. The *padas* written by Kavi Shekhara may be "supposed to refer to Nuṣrat's leaning towards Vaiṣṇava-like divine love." *History of Bengal*, II, p. 158, fn. A similar idea is also gleaned from the *pada* quoted above. The language, metre and idea of this poem do not radically differ from those found in the *padas* of Yashorāj Khān and Kavi Shekhara. That Shaiḥ Kabīr was a contemporary of Nuṣrat seems fairly well-established. Another *Brajavulī* poem containing the *bhaṇitā* of Kabīr deals with the *holī-līlā* or spring festival of Shri-Kṛṣṇa; quoted by J. M. Bhattacharya : *op. cit. pada*, no. 28. It seems that this Kabīr is identical with Shaiḥ Kabīr; but see M. Shahidullah, who identifies Shaiḥ Kabīr with Kavi Shekhara; *Vāṅglā Sāhityer Kathā*, II, p. 66 ff.

1498-99 A.D.<sup>1</sup> by Shaikh Zāhid who tells us, at the outset, that he will discuss the question of the formation of the human body ; for the poet believes that a full knowledge of the act of parturition together with that of the growth of the embryo, is sure to bring liberation to mankind. After giving a detailed cosmology, which we have already noticed, he goes on describing the different stages through which the embryo is supposed to pass, the necessity of preserving semen, the auspicious and inauspicious moments of birth which decide the destiny of the child and the constituent elements of the physical body with numerous knots and nerves including *Īṅgalā* and *Piṅgalā* believed to be frequented by Cupid. As to the linguistic aspect of the poem, it preserves a number of old forms of words<sup>2</sup> traceable only in the *Charyāpadas*, the *Shrīkṛṣṇa-kīrtana*, the *Shrīkṛṣṇa-vijaya* and the *Gorakṣa-vijaya* whose dates range from the tenth to sixteenth centuries. Also the metrical imperfections, which one notices in the poem, point to its antiquity. If it is established beyond doubt that the date of composition of the work is 1420 Shaka, it can be asserted that the *Ādya Parichaya* is the earliest Bengali poem ( if *Charyā* songs are excluded ) dealing with yogic ideas and that it is the precursor of such poems as the *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, *Jñāna-pradīpa*, *Yoga-kāṇḍar* and *Jñāna-sūgara*.

### I(e)

As already mentioned, the period under review marks the growth of romanticism in Bengali literature. Shridhara who wrote the *Vidyā-Sundara*, received patronage from prince Fīrūz,<sup>3</sup> son of Nuṣrat Shāh. A Muslim poet named Sābirid Khān,

1. The verse which contains the date is *brahmār ānana jata rāva-nera kare, gunile jata haya sahasra upare*.
2. Such as *āuṭ* > three and one-half ; *ardha-chaturtha* > *addhauiṭha āhuth* > *āut* ; cf. *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, p. 241 ; *jamma* > *janma*, *kamma* > *karma*, *mitta* > *mitra* etc.
3. The poet has mentioned the name of prince Fīrūz and his father Nuṣrat Shāh ; *supra*, p. 58. The mutilated text of Shridhara's work has been edited and published by Ahmad Sharīf in *The Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1364 B.S. I, pp. 115-34.

wrote another *Vidyā-Sundara*,<sup>1</sup> the date of the composition of which cannot be properly ascertained, for the *bhaṇitās* obtaining in the poem, do not contain any indication thereof. The language of some portions of Sābirid's work resembles that of the *Shrīkṛṣṇa-kīrtana*.<sup>2</sup> The antiquated forms of the verb-ending and the second case-ending appearing frequently in the poem point to its undoubted antiquity.<sup>3</sup> These linguistic peculiarities can hardly be found in the work of Shridhara which does not seem to be earlier than Sābirid's *Vidyā-Sundara*. The most curious point to be noticed about the two poems is the striking resemblance which their narratives bear to each other. One can easily come across frequent coincidences of narration and also of expression, between the *Vidyā-Sundaras* of the two poets. The narrative in the work of Sābirid Khān is considerably long and that of Shridhara's work, short. The latter does not possess the rich variety of metres and simile which the poem of Sābirid abounds in. The limpid lucidity of the style that obtains in Sābirid's work, cannot be had in the work of Shridhara. The various musical modes or *rāgas* mentioned by Shridhara, are conspicuously absent in the poem of Sābirid Khān. Considering these points of resemblance and difference existing between the two poems, it may be reasonably suggested that Shridhara has prepared an abridged version of the work of Sābirid Khān and made it suitable for the singers by inserting *rāgas* in proper places, without acknowledging his indebtedness to Sābirid Khān.

The composition of poems on the romantic episode of Vidyā and Sundara, by the poets mentioned above, is a significant event in the history of Bengali literature. As far as it can be ascertained from a careful perusal of the published

1. The incomplete text, edited by Ahmad Sharif, has been published in the *Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1364 B.S., I, pp. 96-114.
2. Sukumar Sen : *Vāṅglā Sāhityer Itihās*, I, pp. 599-600.
3. Ashutosh Bhattacharya : "Two Early Writers of Vidyā-Sundara", *Bengali Literary Review*, April, 1956, vol. II, no. 1, p. 15.

portions of the poems, the religious background of the story hinted at in the opening lines,<sup>1</sup> has not been able to do away with its human interest. The attention of the poet was thus being gradually diverted from the world of gods and goddesses to that of human beings with its sensibilities, sorrows and joys. The works of Shṛīdhara and Sābirid may be regarded as indicating a definite phase of transition from the religious literature to the secular one and from medievalism to modernism. The literary tradition established by these poets, was followed by a powerful eighteenth century poet, Bhārat Chandra. The stylistic description of the beauty of Vidyā, given by Sābirid,<sup>2</sup> has a clear echo in that of Bhārat Chandra's work. Like Sābirid and Shṛīdhara, Bhārat Chandra has used Sanskrit verses in certain portions of his work, devoted to the conversation between Vidyā and Sundara.<sup>3</sup> The work of Bhārat Chandra is saturated with religious influences, for it has been composed with the avowed object of recounting the greatness of the goddess Chāṇḍī.

To the developments which were thus taking place in the Bengali literature of the time, the cultural *milieu* of the contemporary Jaunpūr and the regions surrounding it, seems to have made significant contributions. Ḥusain Shāh Sharqī, who was residing at Kahlgāon, after having been defeated by Sikandar Lūḍī,<sup>4</sup> had perhaps brought with him a number of Ṣūfīs and poets to Bengal. One of such refugees was Quṭban who composed in 939 A.H./1503 A.D.,<sup>5</sup> a romantic poem in Hindī, called *Mṛgāvalī*. The story narrated in the poem is summarized here : Rāj Kumār, son of Gaṇapat Deo, the Sūryavamshī ruler of

1. *Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1364, 1, pp. 96-99 and 115-17.

2. *Ibid.* p. 122.

3. *Bhārat Chander Granthāvalī*, ed. Brajendra Nath Banerji and Sajani Kanta Das, vol. II, pp. 56-57.

4. *Supra.* ch. II, p. 38.

5. The poet gives *nau sai nau* (sambat ?) or 909 A.H. as the date of the composition of the *Mṛgāvalī*; see *Mṛgāvalī* quoted by Prof. Askari. *J.B.R.S.* 1955, vol. XLI, pt. 4, p. 459.

Chandragad, was once on a hunting excursion. Enamoured of a seven-cloured, fleeting deer, he ran seven *yojanas* or twenty-'crosses', following the mysterious animal till he arrived at the shore of a lake flowing under a huge tree with green foliage. The deer disappeared in the lake. The prince also jumped into it with a view to catching hold of the animal. His attempts having ended in failure, he started staying on at the shore of the lake where his father had a seven-storied house constructed for his dwelling. The elusive deer was Mrgāvatī, the beautiful daughter of Rūpa Murāra, the king of Kāñchannagar. Mrgāvatī could assume the garb of a deer whenever she so desired. Once the prince noticed seven nymph-like ladies sporting and taking their bath in the lake. The most beautiful one of these seven women, was Mrgāvatī. When Mrgāvatī came once again to take her bath in the lake, on an *ekādashī* day, the prince could win her by seizing her clothes. But the union was followed by a painful separation. Taking advantage of the prince's absence, Mrgāvatī once fled away. In his longing stupor, the prince set out in quest of her. On his way, he arrived at a mountainous sea-shore where he saved one Rukmiṇī, from the clutches of a demon, after having killed it. At the earnest entreaties of Rukmiṇī's father, Rājā Devī Rāy Sindhiā, who was a Raghuvamshī Rājput, the prince married her. But the loving nature of the wedded wife could not banish the thoughts of the first love from his mind. Encountering a series of difficulties, he reached Kāñchannagar where the couple had the long-cherished union. The messengers sent by Gaṇapat Deo, came to know of Rāj Kumār's whereabouts from the love-stricken Rukmiṇī who was pouring out her heart before a bird in the form of a *vāramāśā*. They met the prince at Kāñchannagar who now returned home together with Mrgāvatī. On their way, they took Rukmiṇī with them. The story has a tragic end. While on a hunting expedition, the prince died, falling from a mad elephant. The two queens became *sarī*.<sup>1</sup>

1. Extracts from the *Mrgāvatī*, *J.B.R.S.* 1955, pt. 4, pp. 460-83 ; see also my paper, "Vaṅglā Romāntik Kavyer Hindī-Avadhī Paṭabhūmi", *Bengali Academy Patrikā*, 1366 B.S. I, pp. 19-20.

As to the source of the story, the poet says that he has collected materials from the local language in which it was narrated in *adhel* and *āryā* metres.<sup>1</sup> The idea of the elusive deer obtains in the story of Mārīcha in the Rāmāyaṇa and also in the Sudhana-Manoharā episode found in the *Mahāyāna Bauddha Vinayapīṭaka*.<sup>2</sup> Whether Quṭban had any access to these sources is not clearly known. There is the role of a deceptive deer at the beginning of the twelfth-century *Kitāb Samakyyar* of the Bodleian library of Oxford,<sup>3</sup> although it does not have any necessary connection with the long narrative of the work. The *Haft Paikar* of Niẓāmī, written towards the end of the twelfth century, refers to a mysterious and fleeting, onager following which Bahrām Gōr, the Persian prince, arrives at the cave of a mountain. After having killed a dragon, he enters into a mysterious room containing pictures of seven beautiful ladies who represent seven climes. Bahrām's marriage with these seven girls is followed by the construction of a seven-domed building in which he spends seven nights with his wives. Seven stories told by these ladies, constitute the narrative of the *Haft Paikar*.<sup>4</sup> As already noticed, the *Mṛgāvatī* of Qutban not only depicts a seven-coloured deer, but also mentions seven *yojanas*, a seven-storied building and seven ladies taking their bath in the lake.<sup>5</sup> Both Niẓāmī and Quṭban appear to have attached mystic importance to the number seven. Quṭban, the poet of the symbolical work, *Mṛgāvatī*, seems to have been influenced, to some extent, by the *Haft Paikar* which is also considered to be of a symbolical nature.<sup>6</sup> It seems quite

1. *Mṛgāvatī*, quoted by Prof. Askari : *op. cit.* p. 459.

2. Sukumar Sen : *Islāmi Vāṅglā Sāhitya*, p. 10.

3. Ethé : *Catalogue of The Persian MSS. in the Bodleian Library*, no. 442, pp. 42-43, Ouseley nos. 379-80.

4. *Op. cit.* tran. by C. E. Wilson, vol. 1, pp. 51-56 and 106 ff.

5. *Supra.* p. 255 ; see also extracts from *Mṛgāvatī*, *J.B.R.S. op. cit.* pp. 461-465 and 466.

6. The story of Bahrām Gōr as told in the *Haft Paikar* is regarded as illustrating the progress of the Ṣūfī through the seven spiritual stages ; see Introduction to *Haft Paikar*, p. xviii.

Plate III



An illustration from *Mrgāvaṇī*





natural for a Şufî poet like Quṭban to have received inspiration from the work of the Persian Şufî, Nizâmî. In indicating Persian influences on Quṭban's poem, it is not, however, asserted that the story of *Mrgāvatī* is entirely Persian in character without having any Indian background. As a matter of fact, it contains a good deal of Indian elements which will be noticed below. Moreover, the scenes of the fair damsels sporting and taking their bath in the lake and the prince stealing the clothes of *Mrgāvatī* resemble those in the story of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-līlā which the poet incidentally mentions together with the numerous *gopīs* or milkmaids.<sup>1</sup> Though allegorical in character, the *Mrgāvatī* does not lack in human interests which appear to have added a rare lyrical charm to the poem. Spiritual symbolism of the story seems to have been combined with its essential humanism. Gaṇapat, Rukmiṇī and the prince are all human beings placed in a surrounding of reality.

The medieval Hindi romantic stories such as those of *Mrgāvatī*, and *Lorak-Chāndā* or *Mainā Sat*<sup>2</sup> have a good

1. Extracts from *Mrgāvatī*, *op. cit.*, p. 466.
2. The *Mrgāvatī* of Quṭban has not been published. Prof. S.H. Askari has given in a long paper, extracts from the Delhi and Maner MSS. (both in the Persian script) with copious quotations (*J.B.R.S.* 1955, Dec. pt. 4, pp. 452-87) on which the present writer's discussion on the *Mrgāvatī* is mainly based. Illustrations in one of the two MSS. in the Kaithi script, now at the Bharatīya Kālā Bhavana, Benares, exhibiting angularity in facial expression, staring blank eyes and vigorous drawings of the figures, all of which point to the primitiveness of the art, indicate the popularity of Quṭban's work even in that early period of the Rājasthānī school of painting; see pl. iii, attached hereto; see also *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, May 18, 1958, p. 20 and Karl Khandalavala: "The Origin and Development of Rajasthani Painting," *Marg*, vol. xi, no. 2, 1958, March, p. 19, figs. 1-5 and p. 33, figs. 1-2. Of the various editions of Malik Muḥammad Jaisi's work, *Padmāvatī*, ed. Grierson and Sudhakar Trivedi, in the Bibliotheca Indica series, together with an English translation

number of common elements which may be brought out in bold relief, if a comparative study of these works is undertaken. In each of these stories, the hero wanders about in search of his beloved, encountering a series of difficulties, on the way, including fighting with demons and man-eaters, while the wedded wife whom he has left behind, pours out her heart generally in the form of a traditional *vāramāsā*, describing the varying nature of her separation throughout the course of

of the same by A. G. Shirreff, Bib. Ind., 1944, may be consulted. The *Mainā Sat* of Sādhān and the *Chandā'in* of Mawlānā Dawūd are available in mutilated MSS. Agar Chand Nahta has published an edition of the *Mainā Sat* from *Vidyāpitha*. Maulānā Dawūd composed *Chandā'in* dealing with the story of love between Lurak and Chāndā, in the reign of Firūz Shāh Tughluq, in honour of his *wazīr*, Jūnā Shāh; Badāyūnī, *op. cit.*, I, Bib. Ind. text. p. 250. Quotations from the MSS. of this work, discovered at Maner and Bhupal, refer to this incident together with the date of its composition i.e. 779 A.H./1377-78 A.D. For quotations and extracts from the poem, see S. H. Askari: "Rare Fragments of Chandain and Mrigavati", *Current Studies*, 1955, pp. 6-23; "Chandā'in az Mullā Dawūd aur Mainā Sat az Mian Sadhan qadīm Hindī parīm kathā'in" by the same writer in *Mu'āsir*, vol. 16, p. 45ff; M.R. Tarafdar: "Vāṅglā Romanṭik Kāvyer Hindī-Avadhī Paṭabhūmī", 2 pts. *Bengali Academy Patrikā*, 1366 B.S. I, p. 5 ff. and 1367 B.S. II, p. 28ff. Rājasthānī and Apabhraṁsha illustrations of the story of Lurak-Chāndā are now preserved in Lahore Museum, Chandigarh Museum and Bhārat Kalā Bhavana of Benares; see Basil Gray: *Rajput Painting*, p. 3 and *The Art of India and Pakistan*, colour pl. A, and pl. 82, fig. 399 (b); Karl Khandalavala: "Leaves from Rajasthan" *Marg*, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 13, fig. 13A; Chaghtai: "A few Hindu Miniature Painters of the 18th and 19th century," *Islamic Culture*, vol. 8, no. 3, pl. 3; Rai Krishnadas: "An Illustrated Avadhi MS. of Laur-Chanda in the Bharat Kala Bhavan," *Lalit Kala*, nos. 1-2, 1955-56, pp. 66-71, pls. E and xvii, figs. 1-4; M. R. Tarafdar: "Illustrations of the Chandain in the Central Museum Lahore", *J.A.S.P.* 1963, II, p. 109 ff. and figs. 1-xi. Sādhān's *Mainā Sat* is a long *vāramāsā* narrāting the sorrows of Mainā, forsaken by her husband Lurak who has gone

the twelve months of the year. When he returns to his former wife after having won the hands of his beloved, his eventual death is followed by the incident of the two queens practising *satī*. Without multiplying the instances of such common elements, we may suggest here that the strange coincidence of events which is noticed in the stories cited above, may be attributed to the fact that all of them have come from some common source, possibly the popular folk-tales which had been in oral circulation in the northern and north-western parts of India from time immemorial. The mention of *Lurik* dance made by the early fourteenth-century writer, Jyotirishvara Kavishekharaṭhārya and the antiquarian nature of the folk-tale of *Lurik-malla* obtaining in south Bihar,<sup>1</sup> speak of the popularity these romantic episodes enjoyed in early times.

The influence which had been exerted by the *Mṛgāvatī* of Quṭban, on the course of the development of romanticism in Bengali literature, is quite far-reaching. The story of *Mṛgāvatī* has been followed by five Bengali poets whose dates range from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> But its indirect impact on the medieval Bengali literature is of significant importance. Malik Muḥammad Jaisi appears to have accepted

out in search of Chāndā, and also showing how contemptuously she is refusing the love of Chhātān, another prince. Comparing this with the *vāramāsā* portion in Daulat Qāḍī's Bengali poem, *Satī Mainā O Lora-Chandrānī*, the present writer has shown that the two works tally in essential points. It seems fairly certain that Daulat Qāḍī's *vāramāsā* is based on Sādhān's *Mainā Sat*, while the narrative part of the Bengali poem looks like an adaptation from Dāwūd's *Chandā'in*; cf. the Bengali article of the present writer cited above in this footnote.

1. Sukumar Sen : *Islāmi Vāṇila Sāhitya*, pp. 28-29 ; see also Verrier Elwin : *Folk-songs of Chhattishgarh*, pp. 338-70 and Hunter : *A Statistical Account of Bengal, Bhagalpur*, vol. xiv, pp. 87-89.
2. These poets are Dvija Pashupati, Dvija Rāma, Muḥammad Khater, Karim Ullāh and Ibadat Ullāh ; Sukumar Sen : *Islāmi Vāṇila Sāhitya*, pp. 30-40 and 134.

the *Mṛgāvatī* as a model for his celebrated *prem-gāthā*, *Padumāvatī* in which he makes a clear reference to the *Mṛgāvatī-Rāj-kumār* episode.<sup>1</sup> Besides possessing the common elements noticed above, the two works stand in clear relationship with each other. One can easily notice a predominance of Rājput elements in the work of Quṭban who regards Gaṇapat Deo and Rājā Devī Rāi Sindhiā as belonging to the Rājput tribes of Sūrya-varṁsha and Raghuvarṁsha respectively.<sup>2</sup> The place-name, Chandragarh sounds like Chandrāvati,<sup>3</sup> or more properly like Chanderi, the Rājput state in Gwalior.<sup>4</sup> The Rājput ladies of noble birth used to remember at the time of entering into the funeral pyres of their dead husbands, the name of a certain *Mṛgāvatī*<sup>5</sup> of the Bhaṭṭi capital of Derawal, who is supposed to have become a legendary figure by practising *satī*. The Rājput episode resembles the story of Quṭban's *Mṛgāvatī* who is depicted as performing *satī*.<sup>6</sup> The discovery of the manuscripts of the *Mṛgāvatī* in the Kaithi script at Bikaner and Chaukhambha together with the mid-sixteenth century Rājasthānī paintings illustrating one of them, shows how popular the story had become in medieval Rājasthān. The acquaintance of the Rājput mind with similar romantic stories is evidenced by the fact that Kushallābha of Jaisalmer versified in Rājasthānī language, in 1540 A.D., the folk-lore of Dholā-Māravanī.<sup>7</sup> All these point to the Rājput background of the *Mṛgāvatī* which seems to have been based on materials culled from folk-tales obtaining in Rajputana and the

1. *Padumāvatī* : Bib. Ind. canto xxiii, p. 512 : *Rāj-kunār kanchanpur gayu-mirgāvatī kanha jogi bhayu*. The prince went to Kāñchanpur, He became a yogi for the sake of *Mṛgāvatī*.
2. Extracts from *Mṛgāvatī* : *op. cit.* pp. 475 and 476. For the legendary history of these Rājput tribes, see Tod : *Annals and Antiquities of Rājasthān*, vol. i, pp. 55 and 247.
3. For the topography and history of Chandrāvati in Jhālāwār, see Tod : *op. cit.* i, 109 ; iii, 1784-86 and *I.G.I.* vol. xiv, 123-24.
4. Tod : *op. cit.* i, 47-48, f.n. 7 and 180 ; *I.G.I.* x, 163-64.
5. Tod : *op. cit.* ii, 1030.
6. Extracts from *Mṛgāvatī* : *op. cit.* p. 483.
7. Sukumar Sen : *Islāmi Vāñila Sāhitya*, pp. 13-14.

countries surrounding her, which Quṭban might have heard from the Ṣūfīs coming from these regions.

The Rājput colouring seems quite clear in in the *Padumāvatī* in which the hero Ratna Sen has been presented as the king of Chitor which was attacked by 'Alā'-ud-dīn Khaljī. Jaisi gives an elaborate picture of Mānasarodaka lake with Padmāvatī and her attendants sporting and taking their bath in it,<sup>1</sup> which seems to be a close copy of the scene of the lake in which Mṛgāvatī and the beautiful ladies accompanying her, have their occasional bath.<sup>2</sup> Ratna Sen has his first meeting with Padmāvatī, on a *vasanta* (spring) *pañchamī* day, in the temple of Mahādeva,<sup>3</sup> whereas Rāj Kumār is united with Mṛgāvatī on an *ekādashī* day, in the seven-storied temple having beautiful windows and paintings depicting scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārat*.<sup>4</sup> As indicated in one of the opening stanzas of the *Mṛgāvatī*,<sup>5</sup> the story is illustrative of the union of the seeker with the Ultimate Reality. Jaisi brings out the symbolism of his story in the following words : "We make the body Chitaur, the mind the King : we recognise the heart as Singhala, the intellect as the lotus lady. The spiritual guide is the parrot who showed the way : without a spiritual guide who can find the Absolute in the world ? Nagmati is the cares of this world : he whose thoughts are bound up therewith does not escape. Raghava the messenger is Satan, and the Sultan Alauddin is illusion. Consider the story in this manner : receive instruction if you are able to receive it."<sup>6</sup> Such is the probable influence exerted by Quṭban on Jaisi whose work was rendered into Bengali verses by the illustrious poet Ālāul<sup>7</sup> who flourished in

1. *Op. cit.* canto iv.

2. *Op. cit.* pp. 466 and 468-69.

3. *Padumāvatī* : canto xx.

4. Extracts from the *Mṛgāvatī* : *op. cit.* pp. 466 and 468-472.

5. *Op. cit.* p. 455.

6. *Padmāvatī*, tran. by Shirreff, p. 371.

7. The *Padmāvatī* of Ālāul is available in bazar editions. The first

the court of Arakan in the seventeenth century. As already pointed out, the plot of the *Mainā Sat* of Śādhān which has resemblance to that of the *Mṛgāvatī* and the *Padmāvatī*, has made its way into Bengali literature through Daulat Qāḍī's *Saṭī Mainā O Lora Chadrānī*. Quṭbān may thus be regarded as one of the sources from which romanticism has flowed to medieval Bengali literature.

It is very difficult to say if this Hindi-Avadhī background has got any necessary connection with the story of Vidyā-Sundara as told by Śhrīdhara and Sābirid Khān. The incomplete texts of their works give the events upto Sundara's arrival at Kāñchipur, the capital of Vidyā's father. The fragmentary verses at the end of Śhrīdhara's work<sup>1</sup> refer to the arrest of Sundara by the *kotwāl* and Vidyā's importunate lamentation following it and about the rest of the story, the reader is left in the dark. As these stories generally follow a stereotyped pattern and a systematic and logical line of development, it may be possible to reconstruct the missing portions of the story by consulting the relevant part of Bhārat Chandra's work in which it has been stated that Sundara, while frequenting the bed chamber of Vidyā, through an underground tunnel, is caught hold of by the *kotwāls* and ordered by the king to the impaled. Vidyā gives vent to her feelings in pathetic words, as she observes from her balcony the *kotwāls* inflicting inhuman torture on Sundara who can save his life and win the hands of Vidyā after having fervently prayed to the goddess Chāṇḍī. The matrimonial ceremony is followed by the return journey of Sundara accompanied by his consort Vidyā. The poet adds a few lyrical touches to this by giving a description of the six seasons.<sup>2</sup>

Peculiarly enough. all these have their distinct parallels

part of the work has been edited by M. Shahidullah from Dacca in 1950.

1. *Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1364 B S. I, pp. 132-34.
2. *Op. cit.* II, pp. 48-163.

in the Simhal episode of the *Padumāvati* of Jaisi : Ratna Sen tries to enter into the Simhalgaḍ through an underground passage at the exit of which he is arrested by the watchman of the king who orders him to be impaled. The agony of Padmāvati who watches from her balcony the *kotwāls* punishing Ratna Sen, is unbounded. As a result of the interference of Mahādeva and Pārvati, the king not only saves the life of Ratna Sen, but also gives his daughter, Padmāvati, in marriage to him. The couple leave for Chitor. Here also we come across a description of the six seasons.<sup>1</sup>

The Sanskrit version of the story of Vidyā-Sundara as represented by the work of the fourteenth-century Jain poet, Rājashekhara-Sūrī and the Bihlan-Yāminīpūrṇatilakā episode,<sup>2</sup> is quite different from its Bengali counterpart obtaining in the works of Shridhara, Sābirid and Bhārat Chandra. But the strange coincidence which the Bengali *Vidyā-Sundara* bears to the Simhal episode of the *Padumāvati*, is suggestive of the fact that the story has come to Bengal after having absorbed a good deal of folklore elements from upper India and Bihār. But the contention cannot be pushed further unless more reliable evidence is available. The story seems to have been brought to Bengal by the followers of the Sharqī ruler, Husain Shāh.

The biography of Shri-Chaitanya occupies an important place in the history of Bengali literature. It is strange that no prominent Bengali biography of this great religious leader was written during his life time. The famous works like the *Chaitanya-bhāgavat* and the *Chaitanya-Charitāmṛta* were composed towards the end of the sixteenth century when Chaitanya was no more. The only work ascribed to our period is the *Kaḍachā* of Govindadās who is said to have been a close associate of the Lord. But the problem of the historicity of this work has been a subject of keen controversy among Bengali

1. *Padumāvati*, cantos, xxiii-xxix and xxxii.

2. Sukumar Sen ; *Vāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās*, I, pp. 824-28.



scholars some of whom have gone to the extent of regarding it as entirely spurious. Rakhal Das Banerji, who seems to have attached much importance to the *Kaḍachā* has tried to detail the life of Chaitanya on the basis of the information supplied by this work.<sup>1</sup> Dinesh Chandra Sen has laboured much to emphasize the historical value of the *Kaḍachā*.<sup>2</sup> But the Vaiṣṇavas do not take it to be contemporaneous at all with the life of Chaitanya. Thus the controversy centering round the book is endless. The language, ideas and expressions found in it, are undoubtedly modern and the work seems spurious.

## II

Besides Bengali, the local language, Persian was also in use. Although a foreign language, Persian had become so prominent in pre-Mughal Bengal that it could easily attract the notice of the Chinese traveller, Mahuan<sup>3</sup> who visited Bengal in the first part of the fifteenth century. It seems to have enjoyed the status of court language in the period under review. Down to the middle of the fourteenth century, Bengal formed very often a part of the Delhi kingdom where Persian was the official language. The Ilyās Shāhīs who established the independence of Bengal, must have retained Persian for all official purposes. We do not have any convincing proof to show that the Husain Shāhī sultāns replaced it by Arabic. In epigraphic and literary sources, we have such official titles as *sharābdār*, *jāmdār*, *shiqdār*, *sar-i-laṣḥkar*, *wazīr-laṣḥkar*, *laṣḥkar wazīr*, *sar-i-khail*, *kār-i-farmān*, *sar-i-gamāshatah* and *dabīr-i-khāṣ*,<sup>4</sup> all of which are Persian terms. It is mentioned in the *Chaitanya*-

1. R.D. Banerji : *Vāṅgālār Itihās*, II, pp. 296-97 and 300-305.
2. *Govindadāser Kaḍachā*, ed. Dinesh Chandra Sen ; see Introduction given by the editor.
3. *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 530 ; see also Bagchi's tran. of the *Chinese Accounts in the Viśva-Bhārati Annals*, 1945, I, pp. 116 and 124.
4. For these official titles, see the chapter on Administration.

*maṅgal* of Jayānanda<sup>1</sup> that Jagāi and Mādhāi were reciting verses from the *Maḥnawī* and that some of the Brahmins were reading Persian literature. This information is valuable, indicating as it does that Jagāi and Mādhāi, two of the officers of Ḥusain Shāh, had to learn Persian. All these tend to support the view that Persian was adopted as official language by the Ḥusain Shāhī rulers. The coins of this period bear inscriptions in Arabic language. But this does not lend any support to the conjecture that Arabic was the court language, for coins generally contain the names of the ruling sultāns, their dates, mint towns and *kalima* and there was little scope for the use of Persian inscriptions on them. We notice the presence of the Persian alphabet *gāf*, in those coins which have recorded the conquest of Jājnagar.<sup>2</sup> Of course, there is a predominance of Arabic inscriptions, for majority of the inscriptions are in Arabic, and a few only are in Persian.<sup>3</sup> As the inscriptions were fixed to mosques and tombs, they had necessarily to contain Qur'ānic verses to justify the construction of these religious edifices. Although the scope for the use of Persian on inscriptional tablets was thus limited, we have several bilingual inscriptions. Portions of these inscriptions, which are meant for communicating any information to the public, have been written in Persian.<sup>4</sup> That the Sylhet inscription of Ḥusain which records his victory over the rulers

1. *Op. cit.* pp. 56 and 139.

2. *Supra.* pp. 46, 48 and 51.

3. The Sylhet inscription of Ḥusain Shāh dated 912/1512 which declares Ḥusain Shāh to be the conqueror of Kāmṛūpa, Kāmṭa, Orissa and Jājnagar, is written in pure Persian language; see *J.A.S.B.* 1922, pl. ix, p. 413; Dani: *Bibliography*, p. 58 and S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, p. 25, fig. 8. For Persian passages in other inscriptions, see *J.A.S.B.* 1872, pt. i, xlii, p. 106; *J.B.O.R.S.* vol. iv, pt. ii, p. 184; *A.S.R.* xv, pp. 99-100; *E.I.M.* 1929-30, p. 12; Dani: *Bibliography*, pp. 53, 57, 63, 64, 72 etc.; S. Ahmed: *Inscriptions*, pp. 163, 175, 176 etc.

4. See the Sātgaon inscription of Nuṣrat Shāh, *J.A.S.B.* 1870, pt. i, no. 4, p. 297; the first part of the inscription contains a Qur'ānic passage, LXII, 9, and a tradition, and the second part, written

of Kāmrūpa and Orissa, is written in Persian is quite significant.

Although Persian language exerted considerable influence on the life of Bengal, Persian literature does not seem to have flourished in the Husain Shahi period. In fact, no specimen of Persian literature that can be safely ascribed to the pre-Afghān Muslim period, has come down to us. Bengal was politically isolated from northern India and this political isolation led to her cultural isolation. Delhi was receiving fresh waves of immigrants from Persia and other countries that surround her. This is undoubtedly one of the factors leading to the development of a rich Persian literature in pre-Mughal northern India. This was not possible in Bengal, for she does not appear to have had any cultural relation with the Delhi kingdom, nor did she have a permanent bond of friendship with Persia. Barbosa has noticed the presence of the Persian merchants in the cities of Bengal, in the early part of the sixteenth century. These merchants who used to come here direct from Persia, via the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, could not have been as numerous as their Arab partners, nor did they settle here permanently so as to be able to contribute to the growth of Persian literature in Bengal. The state of things remained unchanged till Bengal was conquered and annexed to the Mughal empire.

### III

Sanskrit literature was in its hey-day in the Sena period which produced a galaxy of poets and scholars. Then there was a standstill in all spheres of creative activities which may be attributed to the socio-political anomalies that characterized the life of Bengal for more than a century following the Muslim conquest. The whole Muslim rule covering a period of more

in Persian, points out quite clearly the duties of the governors and *qādis* entrusted with the task of preventing the *mullās* and *zamindārs* from "defrauding legacies"; cf. Dani: *Bibliography*, p. 72 and S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 225.

than five centuries, could produce neither a Jayadeva nor a Dhoyi. The reasons are not far to seek. Sanskrit literature depended, for its growth and nourishment, generally on the patronage of the Sena court and the Brahminical culture that the nobility fostered. With the disintegration of the Sena power, it had neither the court nor the nobility to depend upon, nor did the alien Muslim ruling class interest itself in Sanskrit language and Brahminical culture. The political stability which was brought about by the Ilyās Shāhī rulers, must have given a sense of social security to the different classes of people, not excluding the Brahminical section. Moreover, the short-lived Hindu dynasty, established by Rājā Gaṇeśha, appears to have given an impetus to Brahminical culture. It was in this socio-cultural milieu that Shūlapāṇi and Rāyamukūṭa Bṛhaspati, two of the famous digest-writers of medieval Bengal, flourished.<sup>1</sup> The former was primarily a *Smṛti*-writer and the latter, a *Smṛti*-writer as well as a commentator on ancient Sanskrit epics and lexicography. There was little that could be called creative art, for Sanskrit drama and creative poetry remained unrepresented in the Ilyās Shāhī period. The creative faculty of the Hindu mind seems to have been paralyzed. Coming to the Husain Shāhī period, we notice a sudden out-

1. Shūlapāṇi's date cannot be accurately ascertained. Rai Bahadur Mano Mohan Chakravarti has suggested on some reasonable grounds that he "flourished in the beginning of the fifteenth century A.D., if not earlier", "The History of Smṛti in Bengal and Mithilā"; *J.A.S.B.* 1915, vol. ix, no. 9, p. 342. It is fairly certain that Bṛhaspati Mishra wrote some of his works in the reign of Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh (1415-1431), the converted son of Rājā Gaṇeśha, both of whom he has mentioned in an introductory verse of the *Smṛtiratnahāra*, quoted by R. C. Hazra in *I.H.Q.* xvii, 4, p. 447. The other books written by him are commentaries on the *Kumārasambhava*, *Raghuvamśha* of Kālidāsa, the *Shishupālavadha* of Māgha and on the famous Sanskrit dictionary, *Amarakoṣa*; see Hazra: "Rāyamukūṭa Bṛhaspati", *ibid.* pp. 442-455; see also D. C. Bhattacharya: "Date and Works of Rāyamukūṭa"; *ibid.* pp. 456-71.

burst of literary activities to which the ancient *Dharmashāstra*, the Maithili school of neo-logic and the growing *Gauḍīya* Vaiṣṇavism, appear to have supplied inspiration.

### III(a)

So far as *Smṛti* was concerned, Bengal built up a brilliant tradition in the past. She produced a good number of digest-writers of whom the names and works of Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa, Jīmūtavāhana, Halāyudha Bhaṭṭa, Shulapāṇi and Brhaspati are quite famous.<sup>1</sup> The digest-writers of the period in question must have been greatly influenced by the writings of these scholars. The most illustrious digest-writer of this period is Raghunandana, whose work, *Smṛtitattva*, was meant to be encyclopaedic in its range of socio-religious regulations. It gives the sum-total of *Smṛti*-knowledge that the Hindu mind possessed in those days. Also known as *Aṣṭāviṃśatitattvāni*,<sup>2</sup> this work covers the entire field of *Smṛti* and deals with a wide variety of subjects connected with the Hindu socio-religious regulations relating to intercalary month, inheritance, partition, sacraments

1. For the dates and works of these *nivandhakāras*, see Rai Bahadur Mano Mohan Chakravarti : *op. cit.* pp. 313-342. For Brhaspati Rāyamukuṭa, see above. All of them were predecessors of Raghunandana; P. V. Kane: *History of Dharmasāstra*, vol. I, pp. 298-306, 318-27 and 393-96; see also S. Bandyopadhyay : *op. cit.* p. 8 ff.
2. The work is called *Aṣṭāviṃśatitattvāni*, or twenty-eight *tattvas*, because it is divided into 28 parts known as *Malamāsātattva*, *Dāya°*, *Saṃskāra°*, *Shuddhi°*, *Prāyashchitta°*, *Vivāha°*, *Tithi°*, *Janmāṣṭami°*, *Durgotsava°*, *Vyāvahāra°*, *Ekādashī°*, *Jalāsayotsarga°*, *Chhandogabr̥ṣotsarga°*, *Yajur-br̥ṣotsarga°*, *R̥gbr̥ṣotsarga°*, *Brata°*, *Devapratīṣṭhā°*, *Maṭhapratīṣṭhā°*, *Divya°*, *Jyotiṣa°*, *Vāstuyāga°*, *Dikṣā°*, *Āhnikā°*, *Kṛtya°*, *Puruṣottama°*, *Shrāddha°*, *Yajuhshrāddha°* and *Shūdrakṛtya°*. This list of the *tattvas* is taken from M.M. Chakravarti's article, *J.A.S.B.* 1915, p. 363. In arranging the *tattvas*, Chakravarti has followed the order in which they are mentioned in the *Malamāsa* of Raghunandana. So the arrangement does not

connected with the birth and marriage of the devout Hindu, purification, expiation, lunar days, *Janmāṣṭamī* and *Durgotsava* festivals, law, consecration of idols and temples, the daily duties of a house-holder, the duties and privileges of a Shūdra, pilgrimage, funeral ceremonies and similar other rites.<sup>1</sup> The *Smṛtītattva* abounds in quotations from the numerous, ancient and medieval digest-writers of Bengal and different provinces of India and from the Purāṇas, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārat*.<sup>2</sup> The influence of these works on the *Smṛtītattva* can hardly be over-estimated. Raghunandana has introduced devotional elements in the *Dharmashāstra* possibly under the influence of the *Gītā* which he quotes several times in his writings.<sup>3</sup> Following the same authority, he maintains that one can attain salvation by freeing oneself from attachment to worldly objects and surrendering one's actions completely to God.<sup>4</sup> While dealing with the questions of inheritance, division, legal procedure and proper times for the performance of religious duties, he frequently quotes the views of Jīmūtavāhana, Bhavadēva Bhaṭṭa, Sūlapāṇi and other Bengali *Smṛti*-writers<sup>5</sup> and accepts almost all of them as authoritative. The comprehensive works of Raghunandana gradually superseded those of his contemporary *nivandhakāras* including Śrinātha, Rāmabhadra

follow any chronological order. The titles of these *tattvas* are suggestive of the subjects they discuss. The *Smṛtītattva* of Raghunandana has been edited by Jivānanda Vidyāsagara, in 2 vols, Calcutta, 1895. There is another edition by Syāmākānta Vidhyābhūṣana, Calcutta, 1941. Parts of the *Smṛtītattva* have also been rendered into Bengali.

1. These topics are scattered over the 28 *tattvas* the titles of which are suggestive of the subject-matter they contain.
2. For a list of works and writers cited by Raghunandana, see M. M. Chakravarti : *op. cit.* appendix B, pp. 362-75 ; Bhabatosh Bhattacharya : *op. cit.* J.A.S.B. 1953, p. 160 ff.
3. *Ibid.* p. 165.
4. *Ibid.*
5. M. M. Chakravarti : *op. cit.* pp. 316, 318, 340 etc.

and Govindānanda.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Raghunandana who is the life of the Navadvīpa school of *Smṛti*, seems to have given a final shape to the *Dharmashāstra*, for his injunctions are found even to-day to govern the socio-religious behaviour of the orthodox Hindus of Bengal. Although he has a galaxy of brilliant predecessors in the field of *Smṛti*, he remains without a worthy successor in Bengal. The Brahminical mind was now being diverted to writing the biographies of Chaitanya and discussing Vaiṣṇava philosophy. Moreover, the birth of Bengali language seems to have obscured all classical learning which was cultivated through the medium of Sanskrit.

We have seen above that Raghunandana who has tried to codify Hindu socio-religious laws, has largely drawn upon the ancient *Smṛtis* and the works of a good number of Bengali digest-writers. He not only gives citations from the works like *Manusmṛti*, *Jājñavalkyasmṛti*, *Nārada-smṛti*, *Parāsharasmṛti*, *Agastyasamhitā* and the *Purāṇas*,<sup>2</sup> but also accepts the views

1. Shrinātha, the teacher of Raghunandana, wrote several works and commentaries including *Dāyabhāgatippaṇi*, *Kṛtyatattvārṇava*, *Āchāra-chandrikā*, *Shrāddhadīpikā* and *Shuddhiviveka*, citations from some of which are to be found in the *Shuddhi*, *Āhnikā* and other works of Raghunandana. Shrinātha's son, Rāmabhadra wrote *Dāyabhāgavibṛti*, and *Smṛtitattvavinirṇaya*; see M. M. Chakravarti: *op cit.* J.A.S.B. 1915, pp. 343-50. Govindānanda wrote *Varṣakriyā-kaumudī*, *Dāna°*, *Shrāddha°* and *Shuddhi°*. These have been edited by Kamalakṛṣṇa Smṛtītīrtha, in Bibliotheca Indica series, 1902-5. For information about Govindānanda, see M. M. Chakravarti: *op. cit.* J.A.S.B. 1915, p. 355; P. V. Kane: *op. cit.* pp. 414-15.
2. He quotes the *Manusmṛti* in the *Prāyashchittatattva*, *Shrāddha°*, *Āhnikā°*, *Shuddhi°*, *Jyotiṣa°*, *Malamāsa°*, see J.A.S.B. 1953, pp. 169-70. These citations deal with food, professions to be adopted by the Hindus, the religious merit of gifts and similar other topics. For the quotations from the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* in *Shuddhi°*, *Dīva°*, *Saṁskāra°*, *Malamāsa°*, and *Udvāha°*, *ibid.* p. 171 ff. These citations deal with cremation, legal procedure, marriage, birth

of these authorities as entirely authoritative. This gives us the impression that Bengali socio-religious customs and laws had remained unchanged for thousands of years. But this is an absurd proposition. In fact, important changes were taking place in the Hindu society. As already noticed, lower class socio-religious ideas and practices were gradually finding their way into Brahminical society and non-Brahminical gods and goddesses like Manasā, Chandi and Dharma, were trying to find a suitable place in the Hindu pantheon. Further, there was the impact of Islām on the social life of Bengal. The writings of the famous digest-writer show that he has tried to frame socio-religious regulations quite traditionally, without recognizing the changes that had already taken place. This is undoubtedly an indifference to the realities of life. We have hardly any reason to think that Raghunandana was not conscious of the social and political movements that had far-reaching effects on the life of Bengal. One explanation seems plausible here. Finding that Islamic and local ideas were about to strike at the structure of Brahminism, the *smārta* scholar seems to have tightened up the ancient Brahminical socio-legal system, with a view to retaining the religious integrity and social stability of the Brahminical section of the population. Thus he appears to have failed to realize the fact that the different conflicting forces that were at work in the society, needed a liberal synthesis and that the ancient conservative *Shāstra* required accordingly a general overhauling. In fairness to Raghunandana, it must be said that a liberal course could hardly appeal to him in those days of crystallized conservatism which allowed no innovation in socio-religious behaviour, nor could he disobey the dictates of the ancient *Shāstra*. Raghunandana's writings do not have the effect of narrowing the difference that existed between the Brahminical section and the lower class Hindus and the changes which the great digest-writer has introduced in respect of socio-religious regulations, are quite limited in scope.

rites etc. The works like *Ekādashi°*, *Malamāsa°*, *Tithi°*, *Āhnikā°*, etc., are replete with citations from the *Agastyasamhitā* and the *Parāsharasmṛiti*.



## III(b)

It was in *Nyāya*, a highly speculative branch of knowledge, that the Bengali scholars excelled and surpassed the logicians of other parts of India. The *Navya Nyāya* school of Navadvīpa is inseparably connected with the name of Raghunātha Tārkika Shiromaṇi who may be regarded as its real founder. Flourishing in the first half of the sixteenth century, he wrote a considerable number of works of which the *Tattvachintāmaṇi-dīdhiti* and the *Padārtha-khaṇḍanam*, are quite famous. While the former work is a critical commentary on Gaṅgesha's work, *Tattvachintāmaṇi*, and a running criticism on the different topics of *Nyāya* including negative particles, the latter is an extremely controversial criticism of the categories found in the *Vaiśeṣika* system. Other works of Raghunātha are mostly commentaries and subcommentaries on the writings of his Maithili predecessors. It seems highly probable that the works of Raghunātha had become quite famous in his own life-time, for they are known to have been cited and commented upon by some of his contemporaries including Jānakīnātha Bhaṭṭāchārya Chūḍāmaṇi, Kaṇāda Tarkavāgiṣha, and Haridāsa Nyāyalaṅkāra.<sup>1</sup> The school of *Navya Nyāya* established by Raghunātha in the beginning of the sixteenth century, continued to influence the intellectual life of India down to the eighteenth century. Of the numerous commentators on the writings of Raghunātha, Bhavānanda Siddhāntavāgiṣha, Mathurānātha Tarkavāgiṣha, Jagadīsha Tarkālaṅkāra and Gadādhara Bhaṭṭāchārya Chakravartī<sup>2</sup> living in the

1. M. M. Chakravartī: "History of Navya Nyāya in Bengal and Mithila," *J.A.S.B.* 1915, pp. 274-76; Satis Chandra Vidyabhūṣaṇa: *History of Indian Logic*, p. 465; Phaṇibhūṣaṇa Tarkavāgiṣha: *Nyāya Parichaya*, pp. 25-26; Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya: *Vāṅmālīr Sārasyata Avadāna*, 1, pp. 79-87 and 97-102, etc.
2. For the works and times of these logicians, see M. M. Chakravartī: "History of Navya Nyāya", etc., *J.A.S.B.* 1915, pp. 277-78, 281-82, 285-86, 289-90; D. C. Bhattacharya: *op. cit.* pp. 133-48, 153-71, 178-85; Satish Chandra Vidyabhūṣaṇa: *op. cit.* pp. 467, 469 etc.

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were the celebrated logicians who made valuable contributions to the history of the school of neo-logic.

It is fairly certain that the Mithilā school of *Navya Nyāya* founded by Gaṅgesha in the tenth century and enriched by some of his prominent successors including Vardhamāna and Jayadeva, greatly stimulated *Nyāya* studies in medieval Bengal. Almost all prominent scholars belonging to the Bengal school of neo-logic, are known to have written commentaries on the works of some of the Maithili scholars<sup>1</sup> mentioned above. That they vigorously criticize the views of the Maithili logicians, indicates that there was a state of rivalry between the two schools. The school of Navadvīpa seems to have ultimately overshadowed that of Mithilā which lost its prominence towards the end of the sixteenth century.

When peace returned to Bengal during the Ilyās Shāhī and Husain Shāhī periods, Bengali students, desirous of studying logic, necessarily had to flock to Mithilā, for she was then the only prominent centre of *Nyāya* studies. Immune from Muslim attack for a long time, Mithilā could maintain her seats of learning which received patronage from the rulers of the dynasty of Kāmeshvara (1350-1515). Again the *Navya Nyāya* school was established here long before the fourteenth century. Bengal had thus to depend on Mithilā for inspiration. The process of amalgamation of old *Nyāya* with *Vaiśeṣika* system known as *Navya Nyāya*, started at Mithilā and found its culmination in Bengal. Hence the impact of Mithilā on the literature and logic of Bengal.

Br̥ndāvanadās informs us that the six systems of Indian philosophy were studied regularly at Navadvīpa in the period

1. For the names of the works of Gaṅgesha, Udayanāchārya, Vardhamāna and other Maithili scholars, which were commented upon and criticized by Raghunātha and his successors, see the works and articles cited above.

under review.<sup>1</sup> Though the systems of *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*, *Mīmāṃsā* and *Pātañjal*, might not have been neglected altogether, no prominent work seems to have been written on any one of them. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī flourishing possibly in the sixteenth century, wrote on *Advaitavāda*. Of his works, the *Advaitasiddhi* which tries to establish the soundness of *Advaita* doctrines, is quite famous. In his other works,<sup>2</sup> he deals with Vedānta philosophy, comments on the *Bhagavat Gītā* and the works of Śaṅkarācārya and regards *bhakti* as a means of attaining salvation.

### III (c)

The emotional Vaiṣṇavism of Śhrī-Chaitanya and the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult with its lyricism fertilized Sanskrit literature to a great extent. Although no biography of Chaitanya was written in Bengali in the period under discussion, a beginning was made in Sanskrit language and the biographers are said to have been the direct associates of Chaitanya. These works could hardly be free from subjective elements ; yet they give us valuable information about the life and philosophy of Śhrī-Chaitanya. Historical accuracy and authenticity which are very often paralyzed by the poetical fancy and devotional psychology of the writers, are not the main features of these writings. Nevertheless, they give us clear ideas about the growing Vaiṣṇavism as a devotional cult and its impact on the life of the people.

The *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, written by Murāri Gupta, is probably the earliest Sanskrit biography of Chaitanya. Written in the *kāvya* style, it consists of four *prakramas* or sections and seventy-eight cantos and covers almost all the facts of Chaitanya's life from birth to death. The concluding verse

1. *Op. cit.* adi. xi, p. 80.

2. Chintaharan Chakravarti: "Bengal's contribution to philosophical literature", *Indian Antiquary*, 1929, pp. 204-05.

gives 1435 Shaka/1513-14 A.D., as the date of its composition, although it narrates events connected with the last part of Chaitanya's life including the *Gambhīra-līlā* and incidents concerned with Chaitanya's death which took place in 1533 A.D. It has, therefore, been reasonably inferred that the work was composed immediately after the death of Chaitanya. But the date 1435 Shaka/1513-14 A.D., given at the end of the printed text, cannot be satisfactorily explained.<sup>1</sup> The importance of the work lies in the fact that it was consulted and partly utilized by subsequent biographers including Kavikarṇapūra, Lochanadās and Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj.<sup>2</sup> Thus it is fairly certain that the poem was regarded as a valuable source of information by the biographers of Chaitanya who came after Murāri Gupta. Abounding in a variety of metres, the work does not appear to have had enough of artistic value.

Dāmodara Svarūpa is said to have written a *Kaḍachā* or

1. The presumption that "the concluding verse, which gives its date of composition, originally occurred, as it should, at the end of the second section but was somehow retained even when the supplementary section or sections were added", (S. K. De: *Early History of the Vaisanava Faith and Movement*, p. 29), needs re-examination. Should we then suppose that the first two *prakramas* were written in 1513-14 and the third and fourth ones, after the death of Chaitanya?
2. Lochanadās mentions Murāri's name and the source of his knowledge of Chaitanya's life several times in the different *khaṇḍas* of the *Chaitanya-maṅgal*. In fact, he translates some time the account given by Murāri Gupta. He seems to have borrowed the *Vibhīṣaṇa* episode from Murāri's work. That Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj consulted Murāri's poem is known from clear reference to Murāri Gupta and Dāmodara Svarūpa in the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, adi : ch. XIII, p. 51. See Biman Bihari Majumdar who has stipulated the influence of the work of Murāri Gupta also on the *Bhaktiratnākara*, the eighteenth-century biography of Chaitanya, *op. cit.* pp. 71-72.

biographical work<sup>1</sup> which seems irretrievably lost. Had it survived, we would have probably gleaned from it some ideas about the doctrine of *Pañcha-tattva*<sup>2</sup> which is said to have been introduced by Dāmodara. Moreover, the value of such a biography is quite evident from the fact of Dāmodara's being a direct associate of Shri-Chaitanya.

Of other biographical works on Chaitanya which were composed in the years immediately following our period, the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* and the *Chaitanya-chandrodaya* of Paramānanda Sena, also known as Kavikarṇapūra, are of considerable importance. The former work, a *mahākāvya* in twenty cantos (*sargas*), written in 1464 Shaka/1542-43 A.D.<sup>3</sup> deals with the incidents of the forty-seven years of Chaitanya's life. While writing about the early life of Chaitanya, the author closely follows his predecessor, Murāri Gupta. But cantos from XII to XX appear to be independent of Murāri's work. Thus it seems that after canto XI, Kavikarṇapūra depended upon other sources and possibly upon whatever information he could gather from his contemporaries. Although this work shows the poet's rhetorical capacity, his control over a large number of metres and his power to give beautiful poetical descriptions of scenes and events, it has little poetic merit. Kavikarṇapūra's *Chaitanya-chandrodaya*<sup>4</sup> is a ten-act-drama dealing with the life of Chaitanya. It seems to be an abridged, dramatized version of the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, the poetical work of the author, with the remarkable difference that the drama depicts elaborately

1. As indicated above, Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj had the opportunity to consult and draw upon this work.
2. *Supra*. p. 175.
3. The concluding verse of the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, sl. 49, reads : *Vedā rasāḥ shrutaya induriti-prasiddhe* etc. *Veda*=4, *rasa*=6, *shruti*=4, and *indu*=1. Thus we have 4641=1464 Shaka.
4. For a discussion on the controversy connected with the date of its composition, see Biman Bihari Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-94 and S. K. De : *op. cit.* p. 34, f.n. 1.

the later part of Chaitanya's life which is briefly treated in his poetical work and that the mythical and allegorical elements found in the drama, are significantly absent in the poem.

Besides these biographical works, there were poems and dramas, dealing with the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult. The *Dāna-keli-kaumudī*, the *Lalita-mādhava* and the *Vidagdha-mādhava* are the dramas, composed by Rūpa Gosvāmī, which have the erotic *Bṛndāvana-līlā* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as their commonplace theme. The *Haṁsa-dūta* and the *Uddhavasandesha* of Rūpa and the *Bhramara-dūta* of Rudra Nyāya Vāchaspati, which have the motif of sending love-message, follow the pattern of the *Megha-dūta* of Kālidāsa, although they are in no way capable of standing comparison with that famous poem. It seems that Bengal had a tradition of imitating the *Megha-dūta*; for Dhoyī, living in the court of Lakṣmaṇa Sena, modelled his *Pavana-dūta* on the pattern of the *dūta-kāvya* of Kālidāsa.<sup>1</sup> The *dūta-kāvya*s of the period in question have the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legend as their theme. The *Padyāvalī*<sup>2</sup> of Rūpa is an anthology containing poems of a number of medieval and ancient poets, the verses being devoted to the Kṛṣṇa-līlā episode. The *Sadukti-karṇāmṛta*<sup>3</sup> of Śhrīdharadāsa, another anthology dated in Samvat 1127/1205 A.D. seems to have suggested to Rūpa the plan of this compilation, who has, in fact, reproduced a good number of verses from that anthology in the *Padyāvalī*. The theological works of Bṛndāvana Gosvāmīs, the different *chamṗūs* which utilize both prose and verses, the *kāvya*s like the *Kṛṣṇāhṇika-kaumudī* of Kavikarṇapūra, the *Govinda-līlāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāj, the *Saṅkalpa-kalpadruma* and the *Mādhava-mahotsava* of Jīva, though composed in the third and fourth quarters of the sixteenth century, show the gradual evolution of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult

1. *History of Bengal*, I, pp. 363-64.

2. Edited by S. K. De; published by the University of Dacca, 1934.

3. Edited by Rāmavataṛa Sharma: Published in the Punjab Sanskrit Series, Lahore, 1933.

which process must have started in the days of Jayadeva (who deals with the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa love in his *Gīta-govinda*) or even earlier.

The works of Murāri Gupta and Kavikarṇapūra clearly show how the Chaitanya cult was crystallizing in the first half of the sixteenth century. We are told that Viṣṇu-priyā made an image of Chaitanya with a view to worshipping it,<sup>1</sup> that he was regarded as an *avatāra* or incarnation of Kṛṣṇa even before his death and that his divinity was explicitly recognized by his associates.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Murāri Gupta and Kavikarṇapūra frequently depict Chaitanya as the two-armed, four-armed and six-armed Kṛṣṇa.<sup>3</sup> Their works bring home to us the idea that *bhakti* or devotion is the cardinal point of the Chaitanya cult and that the Lord and his followers were extremely hostile to *Advaitavād*.<sup>4</sup> The biographies written by Murāri Gupta, Kavikarṇapūra and Bṛndāvanadās show that the Vaiṣṇavism of Shri-Chaitanya was a simple, devotional faith, possessing hardly any doctrinal complication. The pattern of the Vaiṣṇava theology and *rasashāstra*, noticed in the scholarly works of Bṛndāvana Gosvāmī, seems to have been woven by them at least a few decades after the death of Chaitanya who seems to have aimed at the realization of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult through *bhakti* saturated with intense emotionalism. The worship of Chaitanya as inculcated in the earlier biographical writings, such as, those of Murāri Gupta, Kavikarṇapūra and Bṛndāvanadās, does not appear to have been the essential feature of the Vaiṣṇava philosophy expounded by the Bṛndāvana school which puts much emphasis on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult by glorifying the Bṛndāvana-līlā and putting esoteric

1. Murāri Gupta : *op. cit.* cited by S. K. De : *The Early History*, p. 428.
2. *Chaitanya-chandrodaya*, cited, *ibid.* p. 438.
3. *Ibid.* pp. 426, 430 and 438.
4. Murāri Gupta : *op. cit.* Kavikarṇapūra : *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, cited, *ibid.* 426, 427 and 430.

interpretation to it.<sup>1</sup> Some of the Bṛndāvana Gosvāmīs acknowledge the divinity of Chaitanya in their *namaskṛyās*,<sup>2</sup> although this is not regarded as a theological question.

Thus the list of the Sanskrit works,<sup>3</sup> produced in the period under review is quite impressive, although their standard does not deserve any special credit. As most of the poets were great scholars, their writings bear the stamp of their scholarship and laborious artificiality. Whatever elegance and beauty are found in the *kāvya*s and dramas is undoubtedly the result of the technical skill possessed by the poets concerned. What they produced, is neither original nor novel. This is due, in a large measure, to the fact that they selected the life of Chaitanya and the Kṛṣṇa-līlā as their themes which provided hardly any scope for originality or novelty. The voluminous *Smṛti* writings and the commentaries and sub-commentaries on the *Nyāya* texts do not have literary interests at all, nor did those who produced them have any literary end in view. The works on *Smṛti* seem to have been meant for providing the Hindu society of the time with social and religious laws. *Navya Nyāya*, which is a highly speculative and abstruse branch of philosophy, does not appear to have had a general appeal. It was probably the result of continuous intellectual exercise undertaken for purely academic reasons. The list of the logicians and digest-writers of this period shows that the cultivation of *Navya Nyāya* and *Smṛti* was monopolized by the Brahmins. In the field of

1. Jīva, conscious of the erotic aspect of the Bṛndāvana-līlā, comes forward with a theological apology in his *Gopāla-champū*, composed towards the end of the sixteenth century. He maintains that the apparently erotic Bṛndāvana-līlā has got an esoteric significance which cannot be realized by ordinary lovers; *ibid.* 481-82.
2. *Ibid.* 323-30.
3. Most of the works, cited above, are edited and printed. Our account of Chaitanyaite Sanskrit literature is primarily based on B. B. Majumdar's *Shrī-Chaitanyachariter Upādāna*, chs. iv, v and vi and S. K. De : *The Early History*, chs. ii and vii.



creative literature, we come across a few non-Brahmins, such as Murāri Gupta, Kavikarṇapūra and Raghunāthadāsa<sup>1</sup> who seem to have received recognition in the world of theologians and litterateurs due to the overwhelming influence of liberal Chaitanyism on the life of the upper class Hindus.

These non-Brahmins appear to have worked as junior partners of the Brahmins in the field of literature where the latter exercised almost a dominating influence. Thus the bulk of the literature of this period comes from the Brahmins. The works on *Smṛti* and *Navya Nyāya* embody a culture that is essentially Brahminical. These together with the poems and dramas bring home to us aspects of a larger society ; but their appeal must have been quite limited. Essentially Brahminical in character, the Sanskrit literature of the time does not seem to have attracted the minds of the ordinary people to whom it was not accessible either. Further, the literature of the time, being the product of the cultivated mind overloaded with the knowledge of poetics, theology, *rasashāstra* and music, could hardly be understood by the common people. The artificial elegance, the artistic embellishment and a considerable amount of technical skill, which characterize the Sanskrit poetry of the time, are suggestive of the fact that there was the impact of urban civilization on it. If we except the two *kāvyas* and one drama on the life of Chaitanya, the whole body of Sanskrit literature is replete with erotic sentiments and amorous pictures.<sup>2</sup> The

1. Murāri Gupta and Kavikarṇapūra were Vaidyas by caste, whereas Raghunāthadāsa, a Kāyastha, enjoyed a landed estate in Hooghly. Raghunātha subsequently became one of the six Gosvāmīs of Bṛndāvana and made remarkable contributions to Vaiṣṇava theology and literature. For information about Murāri, see *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, ādi, ix, p. 58. For Kavikarṇapūra, see S. K. De : *The Early History*, p. 32. For Raghunātha's estates and literary contributions, see *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, antya, vi, 293-94, and S. K. De : *The Early History* etc., pp. 89-93.
2. Most of the Sanskrit dramas and poems of this period are made to follow the principles of *rasashāstra*. The *Vidagdha-mādhava*

poets dealing with *Bṛndāvana-līlā*, go to the extent of giving detailed description of the sexual union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, their erotic gestures, their amorous dalliance and their passionate relationship.<sup>1</sup> It seems that the poets, while dealing with *Bṛndāvana-līlā*, have unconsciously reproduced the picture of the amorous life of the court or the upper class society, which they had in their minds. This seems quite natural in view of the fact that some of the writers of the time such as Rūpa, Sanātana and Jīva were closely associated with the court at least in the beginning of their lives. Of course, the works of Jayadeva and Chāṇḍīdāsa who also deal with the erotic theme of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-līlā, seem to have influenced their writings to a considerable extent. The works of these two poets, again, seem to reflect the condition of the upper class circle of Sena and post-Sena Bengal. Vaiṣṇava Sanskrit poetry with its urban culture, rigid technique and theological scholarship and the writings on *Nyāya* and *Smṛti*, with their dry intellectuality, could hardly appeal to the minds of ordinary

of Rūpa may be cited as an illustration. The different moods of Rādhā, as depicted in it, strictly conform to the grammar of *rasa*. Most of the writers want to display their knowledge and skill in rhetoric. The *Govinda-līlāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kaviraj, (extracts in S. K. De : *op. cit.* p. 463), does not fail to mention elaborately the technical side of music.

1. Rādhā is pictured as *abhisārikā*, *vāsakasajjā*, *utkaṇṭhitā*, *vipralay-dhā* and *khaṇḍitā* woman in the *Vidagdha-mādhava*. The *pūrvā-rāga* of her rival Chandravālī is also described. There is again a vivid description of the union of Kṛṣṇa with Rādhā. S.K. De ; *op. cit.* p. 444. For the erotic sports of Kṛṣṇa at *Bṛndāvana*, as depicted in the *Lalita-mādhava*, see *ibid.*, p. 445. For Kṛṣṇa's dalliances with the *gopis*, his union with Rādhā and his other erotic activities, see Kavikarṇapūra : *Kṛṣṇāhṇika-kaumudī*, cited by S.K. De : *op. cit.* p. 455 ff. Similar topics including the sexual enjoyment of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa abound in Kṛṣṇadāsa Kaviraj's *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, see S. K. De, p. 460 ff. It is needless to refer to more authorities. The poetical works of Jīva and the *chamṛṭis* are full of similar topics.

people. The cultivation of Sanskrit literature was thus confined to the highly educated, upper class people and did never become the vehicle of culture of the general mass of population who now picked up the vernacular language with a view to giving expression to their ideas and sentiments. Bengali literature, thus dependent on rural culture for inspiration, was characterized by a vigour and freshness which could hardly be noticed in the highly stylized, urban, Sanskrit literature that was a spent force.

Whatever might have been the nature and scope of the Sanskrit literature of the period in question, the revival of classical literature and culture noticed above, is undoubtedly a significant event in the history of medieval Bengal. Chaitanya movement was directly responsible for the production of Vaiṣṇava works including the biographical writings and the *kāvya*s, dramas and *chamṛās* dealing with the Kṛṣṇa cult. The growth and development of the schools of *Navya Nyāya* and *Smṛti* seem to have been the result of the working of certain socio-political forces. Conscious of the permanent nature of the Muslim rule, the Brahmins who had lost political power, seem to have tried to assert their intellectual supremacy by reviving the speculative and discursive branches of knowledge through the medium of the obsolete, classical language, Sanskrit. The cultivation of the subjects like *Smṛti* and *Nyāya* is thus suggestive of the defeatist mentality of the Brahmins. As the period under discussion was characterized by the consolidation and stabilization of the administrative system, the rulers must have tried to give a code of laws to the people. The Brahmins appear to have apprehended that the basic integrity of their society would be affected as a result of the probable enforcement of the body of laws which might be essentially Islamic. To stop the process of filtration of Chaitanyism and Śākta-tāntrik lower class ideas to the upper Brahminical circle was probably another motive that actuated them to undertake the task of writing *Smṛti*. A similar process was perhaps at work also in the Sena period which witnessed the composition of a number

of *Dharmashāstras* intended to enforce the rules of ceremonial purity so that the disruptive forces of Buddhism might not convulse the Hindu society. Most of the *Smṛti* writings of the period including the *Dānasāgara* ascribed to Vallāla Sena, betray avowed hostility to the Buddhists.<sup>1</sup> In the period in question, the Brahmins seem to have reacted to the situation by codifying their own religio-legal system with a view to applying it to the society. This attempt is probably exemplified by the works of Raghunandana. Again the cultivation of *Smṛti* needed a basic knowledge of *Nyāya*, for regulated, clear thinking must have been a necessary pre-requisite of the former. This explains why some of the digest-writers were also well-versed in *Nyāya*.<sup>2</sup> Raghunandana's approach to the *Dharmashāstra*, is characterized by the *Pūrvamīmāṃsā* method of reasoning. Thus *Smṛti* and *Nyāya* appear to have been twin sciences. But the Brahminical revivalism did not afford any scope for social progress and expansion.

The Muslim ruling class could hardly be sympathetic to the protective Brahminical culture. It is quite doubtful if the Sanskrit poets and scholars of the period had received even any indirect patronage or encouragement from the Husain Shāhī sultāns who do not seem to have lost sight of the significance of the Brahminical revival. The Sanskrit poets did not have any reason to mention the names of the ruling sultāns, frequently referred to by the vernacular poets. The decadent Brahminism had ultimately to make room for the growing local culture which was already permeating the different aspects of the life of Bengal. The socio-cultural vacuum which was being created by Brahminism for years together, was thus filled up by Bengali language and the fresh and vigorous local culture it encouraged and embodied.

1. R.C. Mitra : *The Decline of Buddhism in India*, pp. 78-79.
2. D.C. Bhattacharya : *op. cit.* p. 49. Shūlapāpi, the famous digest-writer, wrote on the *Mīmāṃsā* system of philosophy ; *ibid.* p. 63.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE*

MAHUAN, the fifteenth century Chinese traveller, found in the cities of Bengal, a good number of professional artists. It is really unfortunate that we have hardly any specimen of the arts and crafts produced by these people. During the period in question, Bengal's contributions to arts other than literature and architecture, were quite insignificant. Still it is worth while to form an idea about some of the branches of arts flourishing in this period. Architecture and calligraphy were largely the product of the court patronage. Similar was the case probably with music, particularly its classical branch which seems to have flourished in the court. We do not know if the rulers of the Husain Shāhi period had any direct connection with the local painters living in those days. Nevertheless, the different types of arts seem to have corresponded to the chequered experiences of social life by absorbing various local elements.

The inscriptions in Arabic or Persian language, which have been discovered so far, clearly show that the art of calligraphy had a continuous growth and development in

Muslim Bengal. It seems to have received proper encouragement from the sultāns of the period under review. The numerous inscriptions which were fixed to the mosques and buildings, constructed at the express order of the sultāns and their governors, clearly exhibit the different styles of writing flourishing in those days. The silver and gold coins, which have come to our hands so far, throw much light on the history of calligraphy. Here, as in Mughal India, the rulers used to confer on the scribes working at their court, various honorific titles like *zarrin-dast*<sup>1</sup> or 'golden-handed'. This Persian term reminds us of similar terms such as *zarrin-qalam*, *shīrīn-qalam* and *anbarīm qalam* that obtain in the history of Mughal painting and calligraphy.<sup>2</sup> A careful study of the Muslim coins and inscriptions of the pre-Ḥusain Shāhī period, reveals that the different major and minor styles of writing such as *Kufic*, *Naskh*, *Thulth* and *Ṭughra*<sup>3</sup> were practised here by the calligraphists. The art of writing seems to have attained a considerable degree of perfection in the Ḥusain Shāhī period.

1. The title *zarrin-dast* was conferred on Ghiyāth who is regarded by Blochmann, as the *kātib* of Sikandar Shāh; see the inscription of Sikandar Shāh, dated 765 A.H./1363 A.D.; *J.A.S.B.* 1872, no. 1, p. 105; Dani: *Bibliography*, p. 12.
2. Ā'in, tran. vol. 1, pp. 106, 109 and 114. Zafar Hasan: "Specimens of Calligraphy in the Delhi Museum", *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, no. 29, p. 10.
3. Most of the coins of this period show the *Naskh* style. Only a few coins of Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh, Naṣir-ud-dīn Maḥmūd Shāh and Rukn-ud-dīn Bārbak Shāh contain *Ṭughra* inscriptions. For the *Ṭughra* character of inscriptions on coins, see Lane-Poole: *op. cit.* pl. iv, nos. 81, 83 (*Ṭughra* form only on the reverse), 85 (only the reverse) and 87; H.N. Wright: *Catalogue*, II, pt. II Bengal, pl. III, nos. 106, 110 (see the obverse only), 111 (obverse only) and 125 (obverse only). The upper panel of the Adina mosque inscription shows the *Kufic* style of writing and the lower one, the *Ṭughra* style; see *Indo-Iranica*, vol. IV, nos. 2-4, fig. 1; see also *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pt. 1, pp. 256-57. The Rajshahi inscription of Jalāl-ud-dīn Faṭḥ Shāh dated 887 A.H. exhibits

Some of the styles mentioned above were prevailing in the Husain Shāhī period. A modified form of *Naskh* style is noticed in the Trivenī inscription of Husain Shāh<sup>1</sup> in which the shafts are peculiarly elongated. Thus it is evident that it shows the influence of *Tughra* style. The *Thulth* which has been defined by Abū'l Fadl as consisting of "one-third curved lines, and two-thirds straight lines"<sup>2</sup> is found in the Kalna inscription of Firūz Shāh,<sup>3</sup> dated 939 A. H. The curves are comparatively poor and neglected and shafts, systematically arranged and elongated. To the same category, belongs the Hājī Bābā Saleh inscription executed in the reign of Husain Shāh<sup>4</sup> in which the style is of an intricate nature.

*Naskh* style ; see *V.R.S. Monographs*, nos. 6, March, 1935, pl. II ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, fig. 29. This inscription seems to indicate transition from *Naskh* to *Thulth*, for it has slight signs of the latter style. The Birāl inscription of Saif-ud-din Firūz dated 880 A.H. shows *Thulth* style ; *ibid.* fig. 31. The same style is shown by the Pāṇḍuā inscription of Naṣir-ud-din Maḥmūd Shāh dated 863 A.H. in which the shafts are systematic and curves, disproportionate and neglected ; *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pt. I, pl. v, fig. 4 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, fig. 20. Faṭh Shāh's inscription found at Bandar in Dacca dated 886 A.H. (*J.A.S.B.* 1873, pl. VII, no. 1) shows the thin type (*khaṭī*) of *Thulth*, while the Haḍrat Pāṇḍuā inscription of Naṣir-ud-din Maḥmūd Shāh II (*ibid.* pl. VII, no. 3 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, fig. 33) shows the bold type (*jālī*) of *Thulth* with *Tughra* characteristics. The Haḍrat Pāṇḍuā inscription of Sikandar Shāh dated 770 A.H. is a specimen of *Tughra* style ; *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pl. v, no. 3 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, fig. 14. Five inscriptions of Bārbak Shāh show *Naskh* and *Tughra* styles ; *E.I.* 1953-54 (Arabic and Persian supplement), pls. VII (a) and VIII.

1. *Indo-Iranica*, vol. IV, nos. 2-4, fig. 7.
2. That is also the precise characteristics of the *Naskh* style of writing ; *Ā'in*, vol. I, p. 106.
3. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pl. VII, no. 2 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, fig. 49.
4. Syed Aulad Hasan : *Notes on the Antiquities of Dacca*, p. 55.

But the *Thulth* and the *Naskh*, if compared with the *Tughrā*, appear to have been minor styles of this period. The *Tughrā* is not an independent style, but is a sub-style of ornamental writing containing some sort of artificial arrangement of script in which the alphabets are so inter-woven that they assume a decorative shape difficult to read.<sup>1</sup> In the course of its gradual process of evolution, the *Tughrā* style appears to have passed through three distinct stages. At the first stage, the vertical strokes are straightened and arranged in a systematic order in a line of spears and the *Tughrā* inscription of this stage is almost similar to the *Thulth* inscription so far as the characteristics are concerned. In the second stage, one may notice in upper portions of the vertical strokes certain slanting signs looking like arrows. In the third and final stage, some letters such as *nūn*, *sīn*, *shīn*, *yāy* and others in which there are curvatures, are written across the body of the shafts in the shape of bows. The elongated shafts are tipped as arrows and the bows are formed by the concave letters mentioned above. The style popularly called Bow and Arrow, is thus an ornamental style of writing in which the concave letters are arranged across the bow-headed ones with the 'bow and arrow motif' characterizing the whole form of writing. It is undoubtedly the most prominent calligraphic style of the Ḥusain Shāhī period. A careful examination of the inscriptions of this period shows that the *Tughrā* became more and more elegant, flowery and decorative so that it over-shadowed other styles of writing.

Two Santoshpur inscriptions of Nuṣrat Shāh,<sup>2</sup> dated 938 A.H./1530-31, clearly exhibit the Bow and Arrow type of *Tughrā*. In both of the inscriptions, the elongated shafts of the vertical strokes have been given the shape of arrow-heads at the tips and the curvature of the concave letters such as *nūn* and *yāh* drawn horizontally, looks like the strings of a bow. The

1. *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, no. 29, p. 18.

2. *E.I. (Arabic and Persian Supplement)*, 1951-52, pl. xi, figs. a and b.



Bow and Arrow type is illustrated by a very beautiful inscription of the same ruler dated 930 A.H./1524 A.D. which is now in the Dacca Museum.<sup>1</sup> The curvatures of the letters are carefully drawn and the vertical shafts, nicely elongated. The artistic representation is further effected by a foliaceous decoration inter-woven into the writing so that it is very difficult to separate the letters from decoration. The Gaud inscription of Nuṣrat Shāh<sup>2</sup> dated 926 A.H./1519-20 seems to illustrate the final stage in the process of the development of the Bow and Arrow type of *Ṭughrā*. The arrow-headed shafts are systematically perfect and the curvatures intertwining about them, artistically drawn. Some of the inscriptions of Husain Shāh<sup>3</sup> representing this type, are characterized by a considerable degree of artistic elegance. This type of *Ṭughrā* seems to have lingered in Bengal down to the third quarter of the sixteenth century. The Rajshahi inscription of Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Bahādur Shāh Sur,<sup>4</sup> dated 966 A.H./1558-59 clearly exhibits the Bow and Arrow motif. Besides having the regular elongation of the arrow-headed strokes and horizontally drawn curvatures, the inscription possesses certain letters which give rise to interesting animal forms. The word *fī* occurring in the beginning of the inscription, gives us a perfect form of a hooded serpent. This characteristic is present in the Santoshpur inscriptions of Nuṣrat Shāh, discussed above. The Murshidabad Babargram inscription of Husain Shāh<sup>5</sup> dated 905 A.H. represents the Organ Pipe type of *Ṭughrā* in which the elongated shafts are systematically arranged in rows.

One can notice the absence of the *Kufic* writing in this period. It was a primitive type of Arabic writing, generally

1. *A General Guide to the Dacca Museum*, pp. 45 and 49.
2. *E.I.M.* 1911-12, pl. xxxi.
3. *I.H.Q.* 1950, pl. facing, p. 183 ; *J.A.S.B.* 1871, pt. i, pls. iv and v.
4. *V.R.S. Monographs*, no. 6, March, 1935, pl. iii ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, fig. 50.
5. *J.A.S.B.* 1917, pl. iii ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, fig. 38.

used in copying the Qur'ān. In the beginning, it was quite simple ; in course of time, it became so artificial and decorative in nature that the inscriptions having this style could not be deciphered by ordinary people. The reaction which started against it seems to have resulted in the complete disappearance of the *Kufic* style by the thirteenth century A.D. from the whole Muslim world.<sup>1</sup> This explains why the style is almost totally absent at the subsequent stage of Indo-Muslim history, although it is found in some of the inscriptions attached to the buildings and mosques belonging to the early period of the Turko-Afghān rule.<sup>2</sup> The Husain Shāhi sultāns could hardly feel the necessity of reviving a style which was already obsolete in the contemporary Muslim world. The *Nasta'liq* style of writing was also absent in Husain Shāhi Bengal due to an obvious reason hinted at by Abū'l Faḍl, according to whom, it was only from the time of Akbar that the style of *Nasta'liq* began to receive "a new impetus."<sup>3</sup>

It should be mentioned here that Bengal did not enjoy absolute monopoly in the cultivation of the Bow and Arrow and Organ Pipe types of *Ṭughrā*, for they flourished in other parts of the fifteenth or sixteenth century India. Some of the coins of the Sharqī rulers of Jaunpūr bear the Organ Pipe type of *Ṭughrā*.<sup>4</sup> It is quite interesting to note that the inscription on the top slab of Mirzā Muhammad Amin's grave at Golconda,<sup>5</sup> bearing the date 1004 A.H./1596 A.D., contains a beautiful specimen of the Bow and Arrow type of *Ṭughrā*. Although the

1. Zafar Hasan : *op. cit.* p. 1.

2. The *Kufic* inscriptions are found in the Qūwwat-ul-Islām mosque and the Āḍhāi din kā Jhonprā mosque at Ajmer and on the tombs of Sulṭān Ghari and Ilutmish ; *E.I.M.* 1911-12, pls. xvi and xxvii.

3. *A'in*, vol. i, p. 109 ; cf. *J.A.S.P.* 1958, p. 212.

4. Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* pl. ix, no. 263 (see the obverse only) ; H. N. Wright : *Catalogue*, II, pt. II, pl. viii, nos. 1 & 110 (reverse only).

5. *Indo-Iranica*, vol. iv, nos. 2-4, p. 18 ; see also fig. no. 11 in the plate facing p. 16.

process of the filtration of Bengali influences to these regions is not clearly known, it may be reasonably inferred here that the Jaunpūrī and Deccani artists had received inspiration from Bengal. As Bengal and Jaunpūr were contiguous, one country could easily influence the cultural life of the other. The sudden appearance of the Bow and Arrow type of *Ṭughra* in Golconda, towards the end of the sixteenth century, cannot be satisfactorily explained. We are told by the chroniclers that the Abyssinians who were expelled from Bengal by Husain Shāh, migrated to the Deccan and Gujrāt.<sup>1</sup> It is just possible that they had carried with them the calligraphic tradition of Bengal to the South. The thorough acquaintance of the Abyssinians with the calligraphic art of Bengal is proved beyond doubt, for the Haḍrat Pāḍuṣ inscription of the last Ḥabshī ruler, Muẓaffar Shāh<sup>2</sup> (898 A.H.), clearly shows that the Bow and Arrow type of *Ṭughra* had already attained to a considerable degree of perfection. If we take into consideration the circumstances narrated above, the influence of the artistic tradition of Bengal on the calligraphic style of Golconda, seems highly probable. The Bow and Arrow type of *Ṭughra* which attained a great degree of perfection in the period in question, had its crude beginning in Gujrāt as early as the first quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The process of this cultural contact has been discussed elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

The peculiar *Ṭughra* style of our period did not last long, for the Mughal conquest introduced here the different styles practised by the Mughal artists and here, as in northern India,

1. Salim : *op. cit.* p. 133 ; Firishtah : *op. cit.* II, p. 302.
2. The inscription is one of the finest specimens of the Bow and Arrow type of *Ṭughra* : *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pl. VI, fig. no. 2 ; *Indo-Iranica*, *op. cit.* fig. VI ; S. Ahmed ; *Inscriptions*, fig. 35 ; cf. also fig. 36.
3. M. A. Chagtai : *op. cit.* pls. 4-6, nos. VIII, Xa, XIII, XIV etc.
4. *Supra*. pp. 121-22 and section III of the present chapter.

*Nasta'liq* overshadowed other styles as a result of which the highly stylized *Ṭughrā* of the Ḥusain *Shāhī*s totally disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is evident that the *Ṭughrā* style of writing reached its highest stage of development under the Ḥusain *Shāhī* rulers of Bengal who had perfected it by adding grace and elegance to the Bow and Arrow type. The calligraphy of this period is characterized by delicacy and grace which we do not find in the art of the contemporary Delhi school which shows a considerable amount of strength and robustness. The intricate Bow and Arrow and the Organ Pipe, almost totally absent in the contemporary Delhi school, may be regarded as a significant and dominating element in the calligraphic art of medieval Bengal.

## II

Due to the paucity of materials, it is difficult to form an accurate idea about the arts of music and painting that must have obtained in the country. There was hardly any distinction between poetry and music, for poems were generally composed for musical purposes. Contemporary Bengali poems mention a good number of *rāgas* or modes in which they were meant to be sung. A careful examination of these *rāgas* shows the nature of music obtaining in Bengal. Frequent mention of the *rāgas* like *Kedāra*, *Dhānashrī*, *Shrī*, *Mallāra*, *Tuḍi*, *Velāveli* and *Bhairavī*,<sup>2</sup> is suggestive of the fact that these

1. Although the Bow and Arrow type of *Ṭughrā* seems to have disappeared with the Mughal conquest, other forms of *Ṭughrā* continued to be practised. Official seals and signatures were very often in *Ṭughrā* character; see the document of *Shāh Shujā'* in Bhattasali's *Taifoor Collection*, pl. 1-T. The top of the document shows signatures of *Shāh Jahān* and *Shujā'* in *Ṭughrā* character.
2. *Vipradās* : *op. cit.* pp. 6, 46, 54, 57 etc.; *Vijaya Gupta* : *op. cit.* p. 41; *Chandīdāsa* : *Shrī-kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*, pp. 3, 6, 9, 12, 14, 18, 22, 30, 31, 62, 75 etc.; *Shrīdhara* : *Vidyā Sundara*, *op. cit.* pp. 120-23, 125, 129-30 and 132-33. They are mentioned in other Bengali poems including the *Chaitanya-bhāgavat* of Bṛndāvanadās and the *Chaitanya-maṅgal* of Lochanadās.

classical airs played important role in the field of Bengal's music which seems to have been connected with the tradition of the classical music of northern India, for the *rāgas* mentioned above, find a regular place in that system.<sup>1</sup> How and when these classical elements made their way into Bengal's music, is not clearly known. The musical traditions of Sind, the Mārāṭhā country and other regions of India, appear to have influenced Bengal's music to a considerable extent. The modes like *Sindhurā* and *Mārhaṭi*<sup>2</sup> probably indicate that these were originally the local airs of Sind and the Mārāṭhā country respectively, ultimately finding a suitable place in the Bengali system of music. Of other *rāgas* that find regular mention in Bengali poems, we may notice here *Paṭhamāñjari*, *Barāḍi Gujjari*, *Bihāgaḍā*, *Rāmakeli* (*Rāmagiri*), *Shyāma-gauḍā*, *Āhira*, *Vāṅgāla*, *Dēshākh* and others.<sup>3</sup> Although it is not possible to give here an exhaustive list of the different modes which were in circulation in Bengal, it may be quite reasonably inferred that most of them were classical. 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain, the last ruler of the Sharqi dynasty of Jaunpur, gave immense impetus to classical music by introducing new elements and composing several airs.<sup>4</sup> His continued residence at Kahlgaon in Bhāgalpur after his defeat by Sikandar Lūdi in 1494 A.D., was of immense significance to the cultural history of Bengal. A good number of artists and musicians must have immigrated into Bengal immediately after the dissolution of the Sharqi dynasty. How much they contributed to Bengali art is difficult to ascertain. We have already suggested that Bengali literature owed

1. *Legacy of India*, pp. 320-21; A.H. Fox Strangways: *The Music of Hindostan*, pp. 170-71.
2. Vijaya Gupta: *op. cit.* p. 92; Shridhara: *Vidyā-Sundara*, *op. cit.* p. 120; Chāṇḍidāsa: *op. cit.* pp. 70, 71 and 114; on this point, see Nihar Ranjan Ray: *op. cit.* p. 769.
3. They abound in the works of Chāṇḍidāsa, Bṛṇḍavanadās and Lochanadās.
4. A. Halim: "North Indian Music", *J.A.S.P.* 1956, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 59-60; *Legacy of India*, p. 293.

much to the romantic elements found in Quṭban's *Mṛgāvatī* and that the Organ Pipe type of *Tuḡhrā* writing practised by the Bengali calligraphers can be noticed on some of the *Sharqī* coins. It is thus fairly established that there was an exchange of ideas and forms between the artists of Bengal and those of Jaunpūr. Bengal's music must have received inspiration from the musicians of Jaunpūr. The celebrated poet Quṭban, has given in his *Mṛgāvatī*, a long list of *rāgas* and *rāginīs* including *Bhairo*, *Sandhurā* (*Sindhurā*), *Banglā* (*Vāṅgāla*), *Todī* (*Tuḍī*), *Desākh* (*Deshākh*), *Patamanjari* (*Paṭamañjari*), *Barāri* (*Barāḍī*), *Dhanāsari* (*Dhānashrī*), *Srīrāg* (*Shrīrāga*), *Malar* (*Mallāra*) and *Gujri* (*Gujjarī*).<sup>1</sup> We have shown above that these modes of music were in vogue in contemporary Bengal. Some of the airs introduced by Husain Shāh Sharqī might have been accepted by the Bengali musicians. The *rāga Gauḍī-shyāmā*, said to have been introduced by the *Sharqī* ruler,<sup>2</sup> is mentioned by Lochanadās<sup>3</sup> as one of the airs obtaining in sixteenth-century Bengal. The *rāga Gaurī*, included in Quṭban's list and mentioned as *rāga Gauḍā* in the *Charyācharya-vinishchaya*,<sup>4</sup> seems to have been connected with the country of Gauḍ. The period in question witnessed the beginning of the tradition of *kīrtana* which seems to have crystallized towards the end of the sixteenth century. Classical modes were so predominant in Bengali music that a good number of works were composed on them in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Commonly known as *Rāganāmā*,<sup>5</sup> these works deal

1. See the extracts from the *Mṛgāvatī op. cit.* pp. 486-87. Other *rāgas* mentioned by Quṭban are *Madhi Maltī*, *Bairātik*, *Gunki*, *Kausik*, *Gaurī*, *Deokali*, *Khanbhāvatī*, *Kuṇ kumbh*, *Hindol*, *Bairāri*, *Nant*, *Sahjagrā*, *Avadī*, *Deepakad*, *Kanod*, *Panch Baranganā*, *Kera'i* (?), *Megh*, *Maṣari* (*Mālashrī* or *Mālsi* in Bengali ?), *Sārangi*, *Kāndhari*, *Hemkali*, *Bkuyun*, *Bhilāsi* and *Khatto* (?); *ibid.*

2. A. Halim; "North Indian Music", *op. cit.* p. 59.

3. *Op. cit.* madhya, p. 8.

4. *Op. cit.* p. 32, song no. 18; see also song nos. 2 and 3.

5. Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad has given an account of these

with the origin, growth and history of some of the classical airs. Dance as a corollary of music, both vocal and instrumental, had a highly stylized character. The last canto of the *Govinda-līlāmṛta* contains a specimen of the versified dancing *tāla*.<sup>1</sup>

While emphasizing the classical nature of the music of the time, we should not overlook the presence of certain local elements in it. Some of the local *rāgas* like *Pāhādīyā* and *Bhāṭīyāli*<sup>2</sup> seem to have been quite famous. It will not be unreasonable to infer that *Vāṅgāla* was originally a local mode of Vaṅga or modern East Bengal. How it made a niche for itself in the structure of the classical music of northern India is not clearly known. Songs about the Pāla kings<sup>3</sup> and local gods and goddesses, which had an appeal to the mind of the larger society, must have assumed the nature of folk music. As a matter of fact, some of the Sanskrit poems of the time divide the *rāgas* into *mārga* or classical and *deshī* or native ones.<sup>4</sup> Local musicians and dancing girls who must have been innumerable, used to enliven the social gatherings and festive occasions of the wealthy people by their lively native songs and local dances.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese account, *Sī Yang Cha'o Kung tien lu*, compiled in 1520 A.D., speaks of the local instrumental songs in the following lines : "There is a class of musicians called *Ken-siao-su-lu-nai* ( players on *kānsā* or bell-metal and *sānāi* or flute ?). They go to the houses of the wealthy people and

works in the *Vāṅglā Prāchīna Puthir Vivaraṇa*, pt. 1, vol. 1, pp. 79, 105-06, 117-18, 143 and 187.

1. Quoted by S. K. De : *The Early History of Vaiṣṇava Faith* etc., p. 463.
2. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 91, 94, 100, 101 ; Bṛndāvanadās ; *op. cit.* madhya, viii, p. 173, xxiii, 272, xxvi, 295 ; Lochanadās : *op. cit.* pp. 19, 34, ādi ; Chaṇḍī-dāsa : *op. cit.* pp. 16, 32, 160 etc.
3. Bṛndāvanadās ; *op. cit.* antya, iv, p. 362.
4. S.K. De : *Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith*, p. 463.
5. *Viśva-Bhārati Annals*, 1945, vol. 1, pp. 124-25 ; *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 532.

the high officials and always play their musical instruments every morning. One beats a small drum, another a big one, and the third blows a *pi-li* (flageolet). Their music begins in a low and slow tone but ends swiftly and in a high pitch. When they finish their musical performance the hosts reward them with wine, food and *tangka*" (silver coins).<sup>1</sup> The music of the Husain Shāhī period was thus a combination of local and classical elements.

Hardly anything is known about painting in the period in question. We cannot say that this branch of art was totally unrepresented in this period, for we are told that Shrī-Chaitanya, on his way from Rāmakeli to Br̥ndāvana, found at the village of Kāṇaiṇāṣhalā, a good number of paintings which had Kṛṣṇa-līlā as their theme.<sup>2</sup> Thus it is evident that the paintings of the time had a religious character. This contention finds corroboration in the illustrated manuscript of the *Harivaṁśa* dated in 1401 Shaka, now preserved in the Asiatic Society of Calcutta.<sup>3</sup> On the cover of this manuscript, different pauranic gods and goddesses and scenes from the Br̥ndāvana-līlā of Kṛṣṇa have been depicted. These paintings reflect the emotionalism of the Kṛṣṇa cult which seems to have saturated the entire cultural life of Bengal. The paintings, published by Dinesh Chandra Sena,<sup>4</sup> breathe the spirit of Neo-vaiṣṇavism. They may or may not belong to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to which period they have been ascribed; but they indicate that they could hardly be produced, had Bengal maintained no tradition of painting at an earlier period.

### III

When the Husain Shāhī dynasty came into being, Bengal had already developed a tradition of architecture. The ambitiously

1. *Ibid.* p. 533; *Vīśva-Bhāratī Annals*, *op. cit.* p. 124.
2. Kṛṣṇadās Kaviraj: *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, madhya, i, p. 77.
3. Tapan Kumar Ray Choudhury: *op. cit.* p. 156.
4. *Bṛhat Vāṅga*, II, see the plates, showing Vaiṣṇava paintings.



planned Adina mosque, the architecturally significant Eklākhī mausoleum, the imposing Dakhil Darwāzah and the beautiful Tāntipādā mosque are some of the representative buildings of the previous period, which mark important stages in the gradual evolution of architecture in Bengal. Although the Husain Shāhī architecture is a continuation of its Ilyās Shāhī or even Abbssinian counterpart, it makes at least a partial departure from the art of the preceding period. This will be noticed by us subsequently.

The surviving monuments of this period do not show sufficient richness in variety and constructional peculiarities. Generally rectangular in plan, these buildings have a long and low facade with the usual curvature exhibited by the cornice above and a number of pointed arches below and have an octagonal tower at each of the corners. Neither the exterior having a series of rectangular panels nor the interior divided into several aisles and bays by stone pillars and brick piers supporting the arcades of pointed arches above, can make any deep impresion upon the mind. The internal space is either rectangular or square and the carved mihrābs are very often many on the internal side of the western wall. The walls are very often faced with stones or glazed tiles.

The ground plan of the Laṭṭan mosque appears to have been derived from the Chāmkāṭī mosque, though the former is of a slightly bigger dimension with its square room measuring 34 feet each side and the corridor on the eastern side being 11 feet wide. Measuring externally  $72\frac{1}{2}$  feet long by 51 feet wide, the building has a front with three arched doorways and recessed vertical panels, each possessing a niche made of a cusped arch rising from decorated pillars. Each of the six corner turrets, four at four corners of the square room and one each at either end of the verandah, has been divided into three sections having round flutes, by means of decorative mouldings. The projected mihrāb at the back of the western wall is flanked by fluted columns reminding us of similar features in the Firuzian architecture of Delhi. Besides the main dome covering the square hall, there

are three of smaller dimensions roofing the corridor and rising above the nicely curved cornice and battlements. The central dome of the corridor resembling some of the domes of the Choṭa Sona mosque, is shaped on the model of the Bengali *chauchālā*, possessing as it does four curved parts connected by bent ridges and having dripping eaves. The main hemispherical dome, which covers the hall, has a cylindrical basement, including blind merlons, which is internally a flat vault resting on an octagonal form, the square being transformed into the octagon by means of arches springing from black stone pillars.

Cunningham has described at considerable length the decorative features of the mosque which have disappeared at present. It seems that the rulers and architects who were directly connected with the construction of this mosque were concerned more with its external ornamentation achieved through glazed-tile-facing<sup>1</sup> than with its organic beauty as a whole. The result is the littleness of composition which the structure shares with most of the buildings of the period in question. It produces, no doubt, the sumptuous effect which the builders seem to have aimed at ; but it lacks the universal appeal characterizing some of the buildings of the earlier period. Creighton<sup>2</sup> and Cunningham<sup>3</sup> are in favour of dating it in 880 A.H. in the reign of Yūsuf Shāh, although there is hardly any evidence in support

1. Cunningham observes that the surface of the mosque was once covered with glazed tiles in different patterns of green, yellow, blue and white colours, that the pleasing view of the arch over the prayer niche "is completely spoiled by narrow horizontal lines of different colours in the spandrels" and that "the lotus flowers of blue and white in the middle of the spandrels are rich and effective, the cornices are all good, and the battlements round the dome, wherever they have been spared by the weather, show a bold treatment that is wanting in the designs of the interior." *Op. cit.* pp. 63-65 ; cf. A.H. Dani: *Muslim Architecture*, pp. 113-14.
2. H. Creighton: *The Ruins of Gaur*, no. ix.
3. *Op. cit.* p. 62.

of such a conclusion. Though the general plan of the mosque is a copy of that of the Chāmkāṭi mosque, in no other respect, does it represent the Ilyās Shāhī period. The architectural style of the building bears clear impressions of the Husain Shāhī period.

The Gumti gate<sup>1</sup> is a square single-domed building with an octagonal tower engaged at each of the four corners. Measuring externally 42 feet and 8 inches square, it has a passage leading from the east to the west through an arched doorway 5 feet wide. The entrance is bordered within a rectangular frame whose upper part exhibits tiers of moulding surmounted with small recesses of an ornamental variety. On both sides of the doorways on the east and the west, there are brick columns with sections of flutings separated by bands of moulding. Of the broken corner towers, the base mouldings only exist. The conventionalized curvature of the Bengali *chauchālā* is imitated in battlements and in the rows of cornice where there is decoration in different patterns and with coloured enamel-bricks. The recesses and projections of the side walls with their panels and carved designs of the stereotyped "bell and chain motif" appear to have been intended to produce the effect of contrast which is wanting in most of the buildings of the period. The inner room, 25 feet square, is roofed over by a hemispherical dome whose weight is conveyed to the ground by stone pillars. The most striking feature of the building is the method employed in achieving the phase of transition from square to circle. It is for the first time that we come across the use of squinch, which, in the context of Bengal architecture, is of utmost historical significance. The location of the building near Shāh Shujā's gate and the method of dome construction employed in it may even create the impression that the Gumti gate was constructed in the Mughal period. But the other characteristic features place it, almost beyond doubt, in Husain Shāhī period. It seems

1. Abid Ali is in favour of connecting it with an inscription dated 918 A.H./1512 A.D., *op. cit.* p. 67.

that some north Indian or Jaunpuri architect supervised the construction of this building—an assumption strengthened by the fact of Husain Sharqī's migration which might have brought in its wake a number of artisans and designers.

The Qadam Rasūl built, according to an inscription fixed on its doorway, by Nuṣrat Shāh in 937 A.H./1531 A.D.,<sup>1</sup> consists of a central hall, 19 feet square with a verandah on three sides, 15 feet wide. The external dimension is 60 feet by 39 feet 6 inches excluding the four corner towers. Apart from the three doorways of the hall, one in front and two at the two sides, the corridor has three arched openings resting on squat, massive and octagonal pillars of stone. Below the horizontal tiers of moulding which form the part of the rectangular frame enclosing the arched doorway, there are lotus bosses at the spandrels. The usual *chauchālā* curvature is shown by the tripple cornice and battlements. A continuous band of moulding interrupted at the openings, divides the entire facade into two equal parts each with rows of panels showing the conventional 'chain and bell motif' or what Percy Brown calls "a monotonous diagram of panels, each repeating the same meaningless and stilted motif giving the whole a trite and stylized appearance."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the highly decorated facade is different from other sides which are relieved by horizontal mouldings and vertical offsets. Each of the octagonal corner turrets is crowned with a small stone pinnacle which is not found in any other building of the period. The central room is roofed over by a dome with a lotus finial at the top and the corridor by barrel vaults flattened outside. Percy Brown finds in this building "the

1. For this inscription, see Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 55 ; E. G. Glazier : *op. cit.* p. 108 ; *J.A.S.B.* 1872, pt. I, p. 338 ; Ravenshaw : *op. cit.* p. 20, pl. 57, no. 23 ; *E.I.* II, p. 286 ; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* pp. 61-62.
2. *Op. cit.* p. 41.

beginning of the decadence",<sup>1</sup> while Fergusson enthusiastically observes, "The general character of the style will be seen in the example from a mosque (?) called the Qadam-i-Rasūl at the south-east gate of the fort at Gaur, and is by no means devoid of architectural merit. The solidity of the supports go far to redeem the inherent weakness of brick architecture, and by giving the arches a firm base to start from, prevents the smallness of their parts from injuring the general effect. The facade is relieved by horizontal mouldings and panels of moulded brick, whilst string-courses of the same extend its whole length. It also presents, though in a very subdued form, the curvilinear form of the roof, which is so characteristic of the style."<sup>2</sup> The frequent appearance of stereotyped features and repetition of monotonous panels on the facade have affected the organic beauty of the building. The importance of the Qadam Rasūl can perhaps be realized from the influence of this type on the temple architecture of Bengal.

Most of the scholars call it a mosque<sup>3</sup> probably because of the fact that it has a corridor on three sides. But it does not have any mihrāb and pulpit, nor does the inscription on its doorway call it a mosque. The centre of the room containing a small carved pedestal of black stone shows that it was meant to receive the stone representation of the Prophet's footprint which has been respectfully mentioned in the inscription referred to above. Buildings purposely constructed to house the stone representation of the Prophet's footprint are also found at other places such as Ahmedabad in Gujrāt and Nabiganj in Dacca.

1. *Op. cit.* pp. 41-42.

2. *Op. cit.* vol. II, p. 256.

3. Creighton : *op. cit.* no. XI ; Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 54 ; Fergusson : *op. cit.* p. 256 and E. B. Havell : *Indian Architecture, Its Psychology, Structure etc.* pp. 59 and 127. But cf. Dani : *Muslim Architecture*, p. 128 where the view is contradicted.

The Jahānīan mosque, built in 941 A.H/1535 A.D.,<sup>1</sup> is an oblong building, 56 feet by 42 feet, with four octagonal corner turrets, each crowned with an elongated stone pinnacle. The entire facade is divided, by slightly curved bands of moulding which runs horizontally below the curved cornice, into four parallel rows of uniform panels showing terracotta decorations. Internally divided into two bays, the mosque has three decorated mihrābs on the western wall corresponding to the three arched openings in front. Each of the six domes covering the roof has been finished with a lotus finial outside.

The buildings which have been described in the foregoing section, were made of bricks which were, of course, profusely used as building materials in the pre-Ḥusain Shāhī period. A modern writer<sup>2</sup> has quite reasonably regarded this style as the "brick style of Bengal". As the period under review was characterized by a revival of stone-cutters' art, stones were used in some of the buildings constructed possibly at the express orders of the royal patrons of art. This group is represented by the Golden mosques of Gauḍ and many other buildings obtaining in the different parts of the kingdom.

The Choṭa Sonā mosque built in the reign of Ḥusain Shāh, is a five-bayed, multi-domed, rectangular building, 82 feet by 52½ feet, with four octagonal corner towers each of which has bands of shallow moulding. The front of the mosque has five arched entrances, the arches being cusped on the outside

1. This date is given in the inscription fixed over the middle doorway of the mosque, see *J.A.S.B.* xli, 1872, pt. 1, p. 339; Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 73; Ravenshaw : *op. cit.* p. 10, pl. 58, no. 25 and Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 93; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 238.
2. Sarasi Kumar Sarasvati : "Indo-Muslim Architecture in Bengal", *J.I.S.O.A.* 1941, vol. ix, p. 33. The same classification on the basis of materials has been followed by A.H. Dani : *Muslim Architecture*, pp. 118 and 129.

and their spandrels having projected bosses. A rectangular frame, which has scroll-work as its decorative feature, encloses each of the doorways and the horizontal bands of moulding and varieties of carving, noticed on the facade, are of a traditionalized nature. The mosque has been faced with stones completely on the outside and partially on the inside. Each of the side walls has three doorways opening into the three longitudinal bays of the building.

The internal measurement of the mosque is 70 feet 4 inches by 40 feet 9 inches. The central aisles which are larger than the side ones, have been covered by three *chauchālā* domes, each possessing four sloping parts converging upon the middle and representing the curvature of typical Bengali huts. The four aisles are roofed over by twelve hemispherical domes which, together with the pyramidal ones, rise above the gently curved cornice and battlements. At the north-western corner of the mosque, there is a ladies' gallery on the upper story which is supported by a number of stone pillars and to which a flight of steps on the north provides the entrance. Apart from the small niche in the ladies' gallery, there are five ones on the internal side of the western wall, corresponding to the five front arches.

Although the central nave of the building flanked by two side wings, seems to be a copy of the prayer hall of the Adina mosque,<sup>1</sup> the richly decorated Chhoṭa Sonā masjid representing the best type of the stone-cutters' art in the period in question, cannot, however, stand any favourable comparison with the buildings of the earlier period which it blindly imitates in design and decoration. The roofing system of the central nave of the Chhoṭa Sonā is also different from that of the Adina, which had a barrel vault.

1. Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 90, pl. xxv ; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 127 and fig. 24, p. 128 ; Dani : *Muslim Architecture*, pp. 138-39.

Fronted by a quadrangular courtyard on every side of which there is an arched doorway measuring  $38\frac{1}{2}$  feet by  $13\frac{1}{2}$  feet, the Baḍa Sonā mosque<sup>1</sup> is a large and solid rectangular building 168 feet by 76 feet, with six towers, four at the four corners of the prayer chamber and two at the ends of the verandah. The plain eastern side has eleven arched doorways leading to corridor in front of the prayer chamber entered by a corresponding number of arched entrances. The arched openings of the side walls lead to the three longitudinal bays into which the mosque has been divided by several stone pillars. The three north-western aisles constitute the ladies' gallery access to which is obtained by a flight of steps on the north. Of the forty-four hemispherical domes which originally covered the building, only the remaining eleven ones of the corridor rise above the curved cornice and horizontal line of battlement. The grand corridor of the mosque, its sparing and simple decoration and the massiveness of the entire construction, have added to its impressiveness which is rarely found in the buildings of the period.

During the period under review, many mosques and buildings were constructed outside the cities of Gaud and Pāṇḍuā. The walls of the mosque at Sura in Dinajpur district are faced with stones showing panels and different designs which resemble those of the Chhoṭa Sonā masjid. From a careful examination of the stylistic feature of the mosque, it appears that it was built in the Ḥusain Shāhī period. Constructed on the model of the Laṭṭan Masjid, the building has a central hall 16 feet square, a corridor in front 17 feet 6 inches long and six octagonal towers at the different angles, four at four corners of the hall and one each at either end of the corridor. The eastern side has three arched entrances and the corridor is covered by three

1. It is evidenced by an inscription that the mosque was constructed in 932 A.H./1526 A.D., in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh; Creighton : *op. cit.* no. v; Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 67; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 47; Ravenshaw : *op. cit.* p. 15; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, pp. 217-18.



hemispherical domes rising above the usually curved cornice. The prayer hall has three doorways on the east corresponding to the three mihrābs on the western wall and one entrance in each of the side walls. The square hall is roofed over by a single hemispherical dome supported by pillars.<sup>1</sup> The brick-built mosque of Hemtabad in Dinajpur district ( 906 A.H/1500 A.D. ), follows the general plan of the Chhoṭa Sonā masjid. The mosque of Bagha, said to hve been built in 930 A.H/1523 A.D.<sup>2</sup> follows the Tāntipāḍā masjid<sup>3</sup> not only in plan but also in dimension. Measuring 75 feet 8 inches by 42 feet 2 inches, it has four corner towers. There are five entrances on the eastern side. The two side openings at each end open into the two bays of the building which was roofed over by ten domes. The north-western corner seems to have been occupied by a ladies' gallery. The Navagrāma mosque in Pabna district built in 932 A.H/1526 A.D.<sup>4</sup> is a single-domed square building with octagonal towers at the four corners. It imitates the decoration and design of the Laṭṭan mosque and the Gumti gate.<sup>5</sup> The Majlis Aulia mosque of Pathrail in Faridpur and the Saṅkarpāshā mosque of Sylhet, though undated, seem to have been constructed in the Husain Shāhī period, for they have the rich embellishment and conventionalized designs which characterize the buildings of this period. Thus the architectural monuments found outside Gauḍ and Pāṇḍuā, seem to have followed the plan and design of the buildings of those metropolitan cities. Displaying tasteless and repeated patterns, most of these buildings do not possess adequate sense of movement in carvings and designs.

1. Cf. Dani : *Muslim Architecture*, p. 161.

2. *J.A.S.B.* 1904, LXIII, p. 111.

3. For the details of this building, see Cunningham : *op. cit.* pp. 61-62 ; Creighton : *op. cit.* pl. XII ; Abid Ali ; *op. cit.* pp. 70-72 ; cf. Sarasvati : *op. cit.* p. 28 ; Dani ; *Muslim Architecture*, p. 159.

4. *E.I.M.* 1937-38, pp. 37-38.

5. Dani : *Muslim Architecture*, pp. 157-59.

In the absence of concrete examples, it is very difficult to have an idea about the types of temples which might have prevailed in Husain Shāhi Bengal. Recent researches on the extant medieval Hindu buildings have conclusively shown that the ancient *rekhā* type of temples continued to be erected in a modified form in the Muslim period.<sup>1</sup> Each specimen of this type consists of a *vimāna*, raised generally on a low base, an elongated *shikhara* showing varieties of carved designs, and a *maṇḍapa*, the whole structure being surmounted by a huge *āmala-kashilā*. It is not clearly known whether the *chauchālā* type of temple, which became quite popular with effect from the seventeenth century A.D., had also been constructed in the period under review. Some of the members of this type, built at Viṣṇupur, in the same century, represent the style in its well-developed form and thus one may reasonably think that it has an earlier origin.<sup>2</sup> While the *rekhā* type exhibits unmistakable Orissan influence, the *chauchālā* type shows a considerable number of constructional and decorative features borrowed from mosque architecture. These features are the arcuate system, a corridor running on three sides of the main room, lavish terracotta decoration on the facade and a specified number of frontal and side entrances which have a particular kind of squat pillars. The second type which is thus

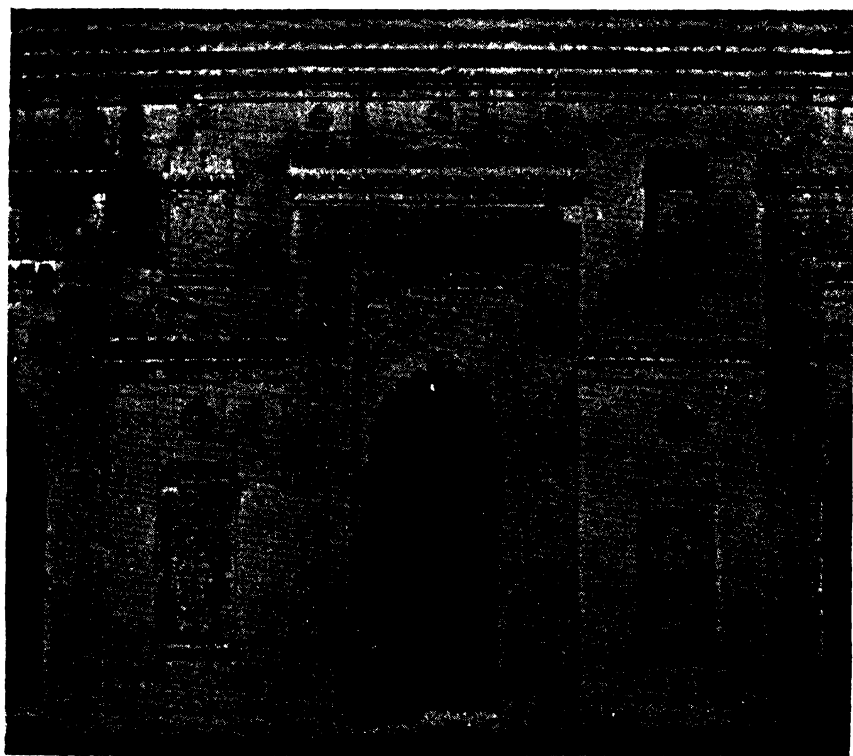
1. One of such temples at Barakar in Burdwan district, is dated in 1382 Shaka/1461 A.D.; see Bhattasali: *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahminical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, p. xvii. For this type of temples constructed in Muslim Bengal, see *ibid.*, pl. LXXXI (excluding fig. a); S. K. Sarasvati: "The Begunia Group of Temples", *J.I.S.O.A.* 1, pp. 124-28, pl. xxxvi. Sarasvati mentions several temples which "can hardly be assigned to a period before the 15th century A.D." *History of Bengal*, 1, p. 502.
2. The liberalism of the Sulṭānate period has been considered to be a great factor responsible for the growth of this type of temple. M. M. Chakravarti: "Bengali Temples and their General Characteristics", *J.A.S.B.* 1909, pp. 141-51. For illustrations, *ibid.* figs. 1-10.

a combination of local *chauchālā* system and significant Indo-Muslim elements, revolutionized the temple architecture in Bengal by accommodating the arcuate system in preference to the lintel system. As indicated below, this type of temple architecture is anticipated by the Muslim buildings like the Qadam Rasūl. Again, the *chauchālā* roofing system has been followed in the central nave of the Chhoṭa Sonā mosque and its curvature is copied in the cornice and battlements of some of the buildings of the period under review.

It may be pointed out here that some of the architectural features of the Bengal monuments of this period resemble those of the buildings in Gujrat constructed in the fifteenth century A.D. The architraves of the two doorways of the Chhoṭa Sonā mosque<sup>1</sup> are strikingly similar to those used in the mihrāb of the Jāmi' masjid of Junagarh.<sup>2</sup> The method of placing additional pillars across each of the corners of the central square room housing the tomb of Shaikh Aḥmad Khattri at Sārkhēj (1441-51 A.D.) is also employed in one of the square-roomed buildings of Gauḍ. The vacant space which is thus created at each of the angular points of the square room of the Gujrat building, looks quite superfluous and is not at all pleasing to the eye. The Bengali architects who were possibly conscious of this technical deficiency, found the necessity of filling up this unnecessary gap with bricks in order to give a pleasant look to the room. The Chhoṭa Sonā and also the earlier Adina mosque with the central nave of each flanked by two side wings and a ladies' gallery at the north-western corner, look more like the mosques of Ahmedabad<sup>3</sup> than like their north

1. Percy Brown : *op. cit.* pl. xxviii, fig. 2 ; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 80, fig. 17 and Havell : *op. cit.* pl. xxxi ; pl. 4 attached hereto.
2. Havell : *op. cit.* pl. xxxii.
3. See Jāmi' mosque of Ahmedabad with its central nave and the ladies' gallery illustrated in Percy Brown's work : *op. cit.* pls. xxxiv and xxxv, fig. 1 and Havell : *op. cit.* pl. xxv ; *supra*, p. 21 ff.

Plate IV



Facade of Chhota Sonā Mosque, Gaud



Indian counterparts. The 'palm and parasite motif' with its elaborate foliage decoration appearing in one of the terracotta designs of the Darasbādī mosque of Gauḍ (1479 A.D.), is quite similar to the one depicted on the perforated screen of the Sidi Saiyid mosque<sup>1</sup> of Ahmedabad (1510-15 A.D.). The former does not, however, possess the elegant flow and graceful movement characterizing the art in the screen of the Sidi Saiyid mosque. The Quṭb Shāhī mosque of Ḥaḍrat Pāṇḍuā built in 990 A.H/1582 A.D., and possessing some of the characteristic features of the Ḥusain Shāhī buildings such as curved battlements, four corner turrets with usual mouldings on them, the use of stones and the probable existence of gildings in walls,<sup>2</sup> has got a square platform in front of the mimbar,<sup>3</sup> which is found also inside the mosque near the mausoleum of Shaikh Āḥmad Khattarī (1451 A.D.). All these seem to point to a long process of exchange of artistic ideas and forms between Bengal and Gujrāt which might have been facilitated by overseas trade which linked up these two distantly situated countries in those days. Nuṣrat Shāh was about to effect a political alliance with Bahādur Shāh of Gujrāt who is said to have had a definite knowledge about the formidable position of Bengal in the field of maritime commerce.<sup>4</sup> Similar contacts seem to have been quite usual in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As already pointed out, some of the administrative and epigraphic features of Bengal in the period under review, resembling those of the fifteenth century Gujrāt, are suggestive of a cultural relationship between these countries.

The style which was evolved by the Ḥusain Shāhī rulers, seems to have influenced the temple architecture of medieval

1. Percy Brown : *op. cit.* p. 41, pl. xli, fig. 1 ; Fergusson : *op. cit.* no. 394 on p. 237 and Havell : *op. cit.* pls. lxii and lviii.
2. Cunningham : *op. cit.* pp. 86-88 and Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 121, fig. 21.
3. *Ibid.* p. 122, fig. 22.
4. Joao de Barros : *op. cit.* reproduced in the *Book of Duarte Barbosa*, II, p. 246.

Bengal. The facade of the mid-seventeenth century temple at Viṣṇupur<sup>1</sup> resembles that of the Qadam Rasūl<sup>2</sup> building in many respects. Both have arched openings supported by short and squat pillars with curved cornice and battlements above. The facade of the Viṣṇupur temple contains an elaborate ornamentation which is also found on the facade of the Qadam Rasūl, although the latter, being a Muslim building does not exhibit figures of gods and goddesses on its walls. The cusped design on the arch in the above mentioned Hindu temple is quite similar to that in Muslim buildings including the Chhoṭa Sonā mosque of Gauḍ. Another example of this type is the Kantanagar temple in Dinajpur. Again the Dimapur gateway with its side turrets, curved battlement and a pointed arch over the entrance<sup>3</sup> seems to be an imitation of the architectural style developed in Bengal. It compares quite favourably with the courtyard gateway of the Baḍa Sonā mosque of Gauḍ.<sup>4</sup>

The Ilyās Shāhī rulers represented the unsophisticated phase of Bengal architecture which appears to have come to an end with the foundation of the Husain Shāhī rule, favouring artistic grace and elegance. The sultāns of the period in question could no longer produce the type of robust and massive buildings constructed in the earlier period. The Baḍa Sonā mosque, the Chhoṭa Sonā mosque and the Laṭṭan mosque have each a spirit of ornamentation which most of the earlier structures lack.

In this period, we find a predominance of stone-cutter's art. The use of epigraphic slabs and stone-pillars was, no doubt, quite common in the pre-Husain Shāhī period ; but there was a comparative scarcity of other kinds of stone-work in that period. The stone-style does not possess the vivid

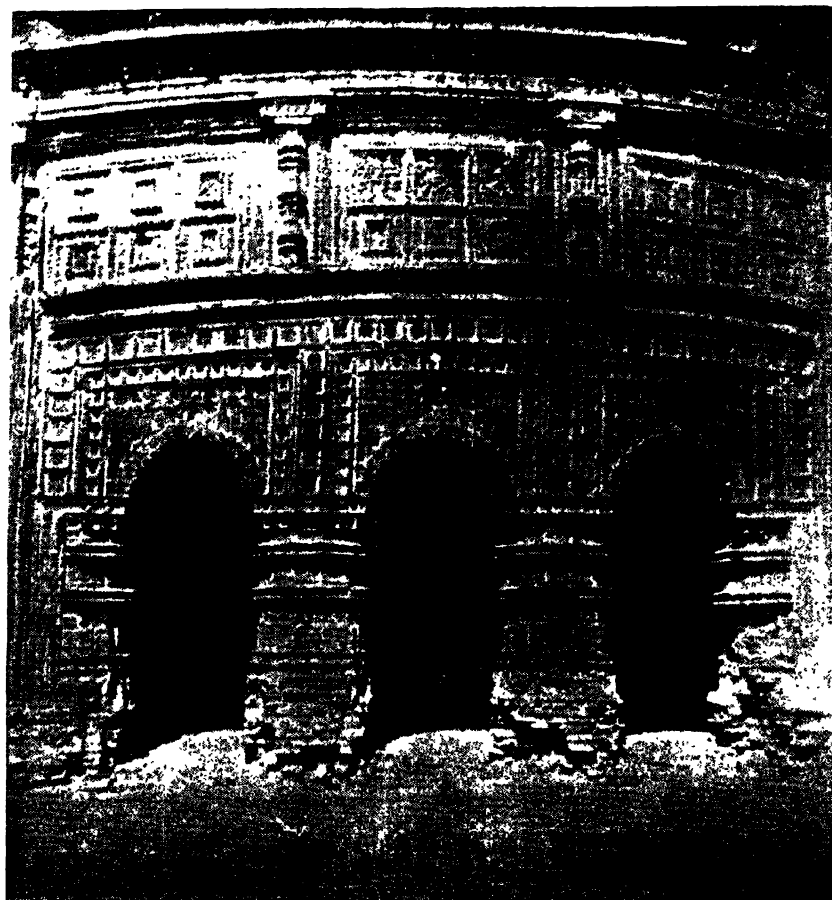
1. See pl. no. 5 attached hereto.

2. S. K. Sarasvati : *op. cit.* p. 34. See pl. no. 6 attached hereto.

3. Gait : *op. cit.* pl. facing p. 245.

4. Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 44, fig. 6.

Plate V



Viṣṇupur Temple





Plate VI



Qadam Rasūl, Gauḍ



impressiveness which we come across in the brick-style of Gaud architecture.

Most of the architectural forms and features which the Ilyās Shāhī developed, were accepted in a modified way, by the builders of the period under review. The old terracotta art, which had its revival in the earlier period of Muslim rule, continued under the Husain Shāhī sultāns. The local elements which find expression in architecture, includes the curvature of cornice and battlements and the copy of *chauchālā*. The curvature of bamboo huts appears, for the first time, in the battlements and cornice of the Eklakhī mausoleum, and then in the buildings of the later Ilyās Shāhī rulers. As already indicated, it survives in the buildings of the Husain Shāhī period. The earliest imitation of the *chauchālā* is found in the Sāt-Gumbad mosque of Bagerhat, built by Khān Jahān who died in 1459. This pyramidal dome is found in the Chhoṭa Sonā mosque and the Laṭṭan mosque both of which belong to our period. The artists of the Husain Shāhī rulers began to imitate terracotta art on stone. But this imitation art could not give the vivid impression of the original art which has characteristics of its own. Thus it seems that the Husain Shāhī period was marked by a deterioration in the art of building. Nevertheless, the architecture of this period clearly reveals local influences and gives frank expression to Bengal's life and culture. In rich ornamentation Husain Shāhī style stands also in strong contrast with rather austere style of the previous phase.

## CHAPTER IX

### *WAYS OF LIFE*

ISLĀM and Hinduism were the two main component elements which constituted the whole socio-religious structure of the country. It is necessary to study each of these societies separately. References to the Muslim society in vernacular literature are meagre and fragmentary. The obvious inference is that there was little contact of the Hindu poets with the upper class or native lower class of the Muslims. What Vijaya Gupta, Vipradās and Kavikañkan have said about the Muslims appears to be casual. Strangely enough, the Persian sources which have given some details about the pure political history of this land, are quite silent on its social conditions. Due to these limitations, our study of the Muslim society of Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal is likely to be hypothetical and conjectural ; our conclusions in this connection have to be necessarily tentative.

At the top of the society, there was the sultān whose unlimited power, pomp and pageantry could inspire awe and respect in the minds of the people. It is not known if

the ruler had any intention to emphasize his divine rights<sup>1</sup> through the assumption of the title of *khālīfatullāh*. But his subjects had reasons to eulogize him not only as 'the adornment of the world' and 'the *tilak*-mark of kings', but also as 'the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa at the age of Kali'. One could conveniently place below the sultān, military governors and revenue farmers. The picture of the Muslim *wazīr* oppressing Rāma-chandra, a Hindu revenue-farmer of south-west Bengal, as depicted in the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta*, is suggestive of the fact that the average revenue official's rank was practically inferior to that of the provincial governor. The nobles with pompous titles and distinctions occupied, no doubt, a privileged position in the medieval society. We have elsewhere explained how the nobility went through a process of transformation at the hands of Husain Shāh who sought to promote the Hindus to positions of distinction. The ruler had to depend on the nobles for active support and co-operation and very often he owed his life and throne to the latter. To the common mass, however, political changes at the top level did not matter much. As Bābur<sup>2</sup> points out, anybody occupying through whatever means, the throne of Bengal found no difficulty in commanding the complete obedience of the people.

The upper section of the Muslim society was composed of the Saiyids, the Mughals, the Pathans and the Arab and Persian merchants living in large number in towns and cities.<sup>3</sup> According to the *Riyāḍ-us-Salāṭīn*, some of these Muslim foreigners used to hold important governmental offices in the kingdom of Gaud.<sup>4</sup> It is obvious that the Mughals who had not yet become the political masters of India, were beginning to be represented as a social element in the Muslim population of the

1. For the Persian and Indian ruler's claim to divine rights, cf. K. M. Ashraf: *op. cit.* pp. 128-29.
2. *Op. cit.* II, p. 482.
3. Vipradās: *op. cit.* p. 143; Barbosa: *op. cit.* II, pp. 138-39.
4. *Op. cit.* p. 133.

country. The term *Maṅgal* has been mentioned in the *Manasā-vijaya* of Vipradās who has associated the *Maṅgals* with the Pathans.<sup>1</sup> It is quite possible that some of the *Maṅgals*, who were allowed by Jalāl-ud-dīn and ‘Alā’-ud-dīn Khaljī to settle around Delhi,<sup>2</sup> had immigrated to Bengal in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Since Nuṣrat Shāh had diplomatic relation with Bābur, it is just possible that a number of Mughals had come to settle in Bengal during his reign. The Pathans, of course, were there, though not as yet driven out from upper India or as political masters of Bengal which they soon became. The numerous clans of the Pathans, *Subāli*, *Nehāli*, *Pani*, *Kudāni* and others, as mentioned by Kavikaṅkan,<sup>3</sup> possibly existed in the Husain Shāhī period also; otherwise, one is sure to be at a loss to explain their sudden appearance in Bengal in Kavikaṅkan’s time. Husain Shāh, the contemporary sultān, was of Arab origin and claimed to have descended from Husain. The same factor explains the immigration of a large number of Saiyids, who, on their arrival, secured the patronage of the ruling authority of the country. As already discussed, most of the Arabs and Persians had adopted trade and commerce as their professions. The description of Coromandel and Malabar as given by Barbosa, clearly shows that the Arabs and the Persians were greatly responsible for the spread of Islām along the coastal region of India. At Malabar during the period, the Arabs or the *Mauplers*, as they were called there, had taken to navigation and agriculture, with absolute monopoly in the latter.<sup>4</sup> The immigrant Muslims were taking native wives there and were being absorbed in the population of the country. A similar process seems to have been at work in Husain Shāhī Bengal also. Some of them probably grew into territorial overlords.

1. Vipradās : *op. cit.* p. 143.

2. Majumdar, Ray Choudhury and Dutta : *The Advanced History of India*, pp. 297 and 300.

3. *Op. cit.* i, p. 260.

4. *Op. cit.* ii, pp. 74-76.

The concentration of white men in urban areas, as indicated by the Portuguese traveller, Barbosa, shows the nature of the professions adopted by the Arabs and the Persians. It is fairly certain that there used to be inter-marriages between the Arabs and the Persians and the issues of such union and their descendants used to command much respect and influence in the society. 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain Shāh who was an Arab by birth, seems to have taken a Persian wife. It is said that he gave his daughter, Raushan Akhtār Bānū, of Persian origin, in marriage to Quṭbul Ashageen whose descendants possessed landed estates in the *sarkār* of Sonārgāon down to the times of the Mughal rulers.<sup>1</sup>

Barbosa's description of the lives, led by the respectable Muslims, shows that they enjoyed complete economic affluence and spent their lives in a state of luxury and "extravagancy".<sup>2</sup> In towns and cities they lived in brick-built houses which had flat roofs and flights of steps.<sup>3</sup> They had great bathing tanks attached to their houses and partook of sumptuous dishes. They used to put on very thin, white, long garments reaching to their ankles with girdles of clothes beneath them and silk scarves over them. They wore rings studded with jewels, and turbans, and publicly carried daggers in their girdles.<sup>4</sup> According to an earlier Chinese account, their food included smoked and roasted beef and mutton, banana, jack-fruit and pomegranate. After the meals were over, they used to have a course of honey and sweetened rose-water.<sup>5</sup> Drinking wine was common in the upper class circles. Barbosa has incidentally mentioned a kind of wine prepared from the palm and used by respectable ladies.<sup>6</sup> Mahuan who noticed many drinking shops in the towns of Bengal, has maintained that wines could be prepared from cocoanut, rice,

1. Bhattasali: *Taifoor Collection*, vii-xv; *supra*. pp. 134-35.

2. *Op. cit.* ii, p. 147.

3. *Viśva-Bhāratī Annals*, *op. cit.* pp. 121 and 124.

4. Barbosa: *op. cit.* ii, p. 147.

5. *Viśva-Bhāratī Annals*, *op. cit.* pp. 119 and 131.

6. Barbosa, *op. cit.* ii, p. 148.



'tarry' and 'kadjang' and that ardent spirits were sold in the market places.<sup>1</sup> The wealthy Muslims had their occasional social gatherings which were rendered quite lively by music and dance. On such occasions, they invited musicians and dancing girls<sup>2</sup> whose coloured dress and dazzling ornaments added much to the pomp and grandeur of the festivities.

So bewildering was the nature of the luxuries of Bengal that Humāyūn who came to Gauḍ in 1538 A.D., is said to have been struck with wonder at the sight of her beautiful palaces provided with fountains and gardens having flower-beds and stone channels of water. Chinese tiles were used in the floor and internal walls of the rooms of these palaces which contained valuable furniture and luxurious curtains. The entire environment must have had a fascinating effect on the mind of Humāyūn.<sup>3</sup>

The luxurious habits of the wealthy Muslims were responsible for the prevalence of several social institutions. Polygamy was widely practised by them and the number of their wives was possibly without any limit. While confining these women to their respective houses, they did not forget to behave well with them, "giving them great store of gold, silver and apparel of fine silk". The female folk used to meet only at night, the occasions being attended by "great festivities, and rejoicings and superfluity of wines". They could skilfully play on different musical instruments.<sup>4</sup> Barbosa has mentioned gold, silver and apparel of fine silk which clearly indicate that the ladies of the upper class used to put on gold and silver ornaments and silk clothes. The Chinese account seems to corroborate this view.

Concubinage appears to have been closely associated with

1. *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 531 ; *Viśva-Bhārati Annals*, *op. cit.* p. 119.
2. *J.R.A.S.* 1895, p. 532 ; see also *Si Yang Ch'ao Kung tien lu*, *op. cit.* pp. 124-25.
3. *Wāqī'āt-i-Mushṭāqī*, cited by K. M. Ashraf, *op. cit.* pp. 334-35.
4. Barbosa, *op. cit.* II, pp. 147-48.

the life of the upper class people. The women of Maḥmūd Shāh III were 10,000 in number,<sup>1</sup> a figure given by de Barros who had every reason to be hostile to the sultān and who might have thus magnified the number of his concubines. But it cannot be denied that his statement contains some grain of truth, for this information is confirmed by Barbosa, according to whom, the respectable Moors used to have "three or four wives or as many as he can maintain."<sup>2</sup> As strict Islamic regulations do not allow a Muslim to possess more than four wives at a time, the contention of Barbosa can be satisfactorily explained, if we remember that the wealthy Muslims had concubines, besides several married wives. Excessive wealth concentrated in the hands of the upper class people can perhaps explain the growth of such an institution. These wealthy people seem to have utilized the services of eunuchs and slaves. The institutions of polygamy, concubinage and slavery, which prevailed in those days, may be attributed to the overflow of wealth in the upper class of society.

It may be reasonably conjectured here that the description of the life of the rich Muslims including the Mughal grantees, as given in the *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibī* and also in the accounts of the foreign travellers visiting Bengal during the Mughal rule, is possibly true of the Muslim aristocracy of our period also, at least in respect of pomp and grandeur. The regional governors with their courts had developed a culture and civilization of their own, and, unlike the Mughal officers, had direct touch with the people with whose language they were possibly conversant. We are told that the local governors were very often interested in the stories of the *Mahābhārat* which were narrated to them in Bengali verses by the local bards flourishing in their courts.<sup>3</sup>

1. Extracts from *Da Asia*, given by Blochmann, *J.A.S.B.* 1873, pt. 1, p. 298.
2. *Op. cit.* II, 147-48.
3. *Supra.* pp. 240 and 241.

While the upper class of the Muslim society was thus composed of the Saiyids, Mughals, Pathans and the high government officials, the cultivators, weavers and those who had adopted similar other professions, belonged to the lower strata of the population. The economic position of the Muslim cultivators and weavers has already been discussed. It is quite natural that some of them were converts from Hinduism or the descendants of such converts. Some of the professions were monopolized by the Muslims. Even the Hindus had to depend upon Muslim tailors.<sup>1</sup> The sailor class of Bengal was mostly composed of Muslims. The broad economic divisions of the Muslims including the *piṭhāri* ( cake-seller ), *kābāḍi* ( fish-seller ), *kāgazi* ( the maker of paper ), *raṅgrez* ( the cloth-dyer ), *hazam* ( those whose profession was to circumcise children ), *kasāi* ( butcher ) and *shānākar* ( the maker of looms )<sup>2</sup> bear out the truth of the conclusion that the economic structure of the Muslim society had grown almost to its full stature towards the end of the sixteenth century and that the process of this growth was already at work during the period under review.

The lower class people, living in towns and cities, were greatly influenced by the upper class whom they used to imitate in their day-to-day affairs. They put on "short white shifts which come half-way down their thighs, and on their heads little twisted turban of three or four folds", and also used "well-wrought" and "gilded" sandals and shoes.<sup>3</sup> The pious Muslims used to shave their heads, wear beards, and put on the *ijār*, turban and cap. While meeting one another, they did not forget to exchange *salām*. Lighting up evening lamps at the shrines of the *pīrs*, and offering confectionaries to them, were quite usual with them.<sup>4</sup> In fact, mosques and *maqāms* were the

1. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, *op. cit.* 3di, xvii, p. 67.

2. *Kavikaṅkan-chaṇḍī*, I, pp. 260-61.

3. Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, p. 148.

4. Vipradās : *op. cit.* pp. 67-68 ; Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56 ; Mahuan's Account, *op. cit.* p. 530 ; *Kavikaṅkan-chaṇḍī*, I, p. 259.

meeting places for them. The picture of the pious Muslims of Bengal, as depicted in the vernacular literature, does not fundamentally differ from that of the religious-minded Muslims residing in other parts of the world. Thus it seems that the poets of the period in question have given an idealistic picture of the Muslim community to which they had hardly any access.

Widow remarriage was a common institution at least among the Muslims of lower classes. It was so repugnant to the Hindu of the orthodox society that the author of the *Manasā-maṅgal* tried to picture a Musalman woman as marrying three husbands in course of a month and yet longing for another, while the dead body of her husband had not yet been committed to the grave.<sup>1</sup> Little wonder that an orthodox Hindu whose ideal was *satī*, would frown upon the idea of widow remarriage which was nothing but the infidelity of Musalman women, while fidelity to the dead husband is the theme of Behulā's story. The Musalman widows also duly mourned their husbands' death by abstaining from taking meat or fish for at least a week.<sup>2</sup> The term *nikā* (*nikāḥ*) has been frequently used in the vernacular literature of the time to mean the institution of widow remarriage, practised in the Muslim society.<sup>3</sup>

The general level of education and culture attained by the Muslims can hardly be ascertained. Ḥusain Shāh encouraged the spread of education among his subjects by establishing a number of colleges and educational institutions. The English Bazar inscription of the sultān, dated 907 A.H/1502 A.D., records the construction of a *madrasah*<sup>4</sup> "for the teaching of the sciences of religion and instruction in those orders which alone are true". This wording clearly indicates that education was of a

1. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* p. 60.

2. *Ibid.* p. 60.

3. *Ibid.* p. 60.

4. *J.A.S.B.* 1874, p. 303 ; Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 49 ; S. Ahmed : *Inscriptions*, p. 159.

religious nature and that the students were generally instructed in the rules of *fiqh* or jurisprudence and law. The teachers appointed by the rulers were perhaps well-versed in certain subjects including law and enjoyed much prestige in the society. Taqī-ud-dīn, one of these teachers, whose name is recorded in the Sonārgāon inscription<sup>1</sup> of Nuṣrat Shāh, had the high-sounding title of *malik-ul-umara wāl-wazarā'* and was regarded as the chief of the lawyers and teachers of traditions. The importance attached by the Husain Shāhis to education is evidenced by the fact that the English Bazar inscription, already referred to, begins with the famous saying of the Prophet, "search after knowledge, and if it were in China". These fragmentary materials can hardly help us to get an idea about the nature of the educational institutions of the time ; nothing is known about the types of secondary education and higher education. How far the institutions established by the rulers had been successful in improving the condition of the people is not clearly known.

Because of the gradual spread of Islām in this country, Muslim society was going through a continuous process of expansion. Thus one notices two distinct elements in the Muslim population of the time. These were the foreigners including the Arabs and the Persians who had associated themselves partly with the royal authority and partly with trade and commerce. Another important element was the local converts who had hardly any reason to give up their original ideas, beliefs and professions. By virtue of their being converted to Islām, they were called Muslims ; but in reality, they did not differ much from their Hindu brethren. Thus they represented an indigenous culture, while the foreigners stood for what may be called Arabian or Persian culture. But we do not observe any cultural conflict within the Muslim community. This seems to have been due to the catholic attitude of the Husain Shāhi rulers who were interested in the local culture.

## II

Hindu society was based on the caste system which was again formed on the basis of different professions taken up by the various sections of the community. Brahmins, Kāyasthas and Vaidyas were the prominent castes of the Hindu society of the period under discussion. Rāḍhī and Vārendra Brahmins who derive their names from Rāḍh in West Bengal, and Varendra, the small strip of land, east of the Ganges in Rājshāhī, were not absent in Bengal. Kavikaṅkan has mentioned the Vārendra Brahmins living in West Bengal towards the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> These Vārendra Brahmins were classified into several divisions or *paṭis* by Udayanāchārya Bhāduḍi of Rājshāhī living in the middle of the fifteenth century. If the *Premvilās* is to be relied upon, marriages between these two sections of Brahmins were quite common in those days. Vedic Brahmins could be largely found in south-east Bengal. Vijaya Gupta who has given the picture of the Hindu society, obtaining in the region, east of the Bhāgirathī, has mentioned that the Brahmins living in that area were *chaturvedī* Brahmins,<sup>2</sup> or Brahmins who had the knowledge of the four Vedas. From what has been said by Vijaya Gupta and Vipradās,<sup>3</sup> it appears that the Brahmins were traditionally following their religious pursuits and the study and teaching of scriptures. But this statement cannot be taken in an absolute sense, for there were cases of deviations from the duties and functions of the Brahmins as prescribed by the ancient *shāstrakāras*. Rūpa and Sanātana, though Brahmins, were serving under the Husain Shāhī government. This was not in any way a new development in the medieval Hindu society. Even in ancient Bengal, some of the Brahmins adopted professions other than what was prescribed by the *shāstra*.<sup>4</sup>

Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 67 ; S. Ahmed, *Inscriptions*, p. 209.

1. *Op. cit.* 1, p. 263.

2. *Op. cit.* p. 4.

3. *Supra.* pp. 157-58.

4. *History of Bengal*, vol. 1, p. 584.

Raghunandana writing about the middle of the sixteenth century, quotes the *Manusmṛti* to support the view that Brahmins, if pressed hard with poverty, can adopt any means of livelihood.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is evident that socio-economic changes had already taken place in Hindu society. The caste system of the Husain Shāhī Hindu society did not radically differ from its counterpart in pre-Muslim Bengal. *Gandhavaṇik* (seller of spices, scents and drugs), *tantuvāya* (weaver), *kumbhakāra* (potter), *karmakāra* (black-smith), *tāmbulik* (betel-leaf seller), *mālākar* (flower-seller), *shaṅkhavaṇik* (dealer in conch-shells), *kāmsakāra* (brazier), *jālīā* (fisherman), *nāpit* (barber), *goālā* (milkman), *chāmār* (tanner), *qom*, *chaṇḍāl* and the higher castes like Kāyastha and Vaidya were traditionally pursuing their respective professions in Husain Shāhī Bengal.<sup>2</sup> A learned scholar has clearly shown that these castes existed in pre-Muslim Bengal and also in the nineteenth-century Bengal.<sup>3</sup> It is fairly certain that almost all the sects and sub-sects mentioned in the *Bṛhad-dharmapurāṇa* and the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*<sup>4</sup> existed in our period. The Kṣatriyas do not seem to have formed a regular caste in Husain Shāhī society. They are no doubt mentioned by Kavikaṅkan who seems to have associated them with the Rājputa.<sup>5</sup> It must be mentioned here that Kavikaṅkan composed his poems when Mughal rule was going to be established in this country and that it had brought here a new set of officials from northern India. It seems that the Kṣatriyas referred to by Kavikaṅkan came to Bengal in the wake of the Mughal conquest. The rigidity of caste system seems to have prevented inter-marriage and inter-dining. The Shudras could not read the

1. *Shuddhitattva*, cited by B.T. Bhattacharya in *J.A.S.B.* xix, p. 170.

2. Bṛndavanadās, *op. cit.* madhya, I, p. 120, xxiii, pp. 264 and 278; Vijaya Gupta, *op. cit.* pp. 4; 71-76 and 152-55; *Chaṇḍi-maṅgal*, I, pp. 266-73.

3. *History of Bengal*, I, pp. 568-70 and 573-74.

4. *Ibid.* p. 568 ff. and Nihar Ranjan Ray, *op. cit.* p. 303 ff.

5. *Op. cit.* I, p. 265.

Purāṇas and the Vedas.<sup>1</sup> It is quite recently that the caste system of the Hindus has begun to lose its former rigidity,

Hindus had then, as now, various social ceremonies and institutions connected with their birth, marriage and death. At birth the Hindu baby was washed with Ganges-water and its head smeared with oil. Different musical instruments including conch-shell and flute were played upon on this occasion. Śaṣṭhī, the goddess of children, was worshipped on the sixth day following the birth. Then there followed the ceremony, *koṣṭhī-gaṇanā* or the calculation of the destiny of the new-born baby by the aspects of the planets at its birth and this could obviously be done by a Brahmin who had some astrological knowledge. After a month was over, the mother used to celebrate *vālak-utthāna-parva* by taking a bath in the Ganges and worshipping the river. Possibly in the beginning of the second month, a name was given to the child. When the child became six months old, the first rice-ceremony, known as *annaprāśana*, was celebrated. On this occasion, Brahmins were invited. At an auspicious moment, the baby's ears were pierced. The next ceremony was called *chūḍākaraṇa* or the ceremony of first tonsure. The educational career of the child started quite ceremoniously.<sup>2</sup> It seems that these customs had no uniform character throughout the whole country. This explains why all of them are not commonly mentioned by Bṛndāvanadās, Kavikaṅkan and Vijaya Gupta who represented different localities. Raghunandana has discussed proper times for the observance of different *samskāras* such as *garbhādhāna* (impregnation), *puṅsa-vana* (the rite to ensure the birth of a male child), *sīmantonmayana* (the rite of hair-dressing by using vermilion), *śoṣyantīhoma* (the rite performed at the time of labour pain), *jāta-karmaṇ* (the rite observed after the birth of the child), *nāmakaraṇa* (the rite of naming the baby), *niṣkramaṇa* (the ceremony of

1. Bṛndāvanadās, *op. cit.* ādi, xiv, p. 107.

2. *Ibid.* ādi, ii, pp. 16, 18; iii, p. 19; v, p. 31; Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 150-51.



taking out the child for the first time into open air), *annaprāshana* ( the ceremony of giving rice to the child for the first time ), *chūdākaraṇa* ( the ceremony of tonsure ), *upanayana* ( the ceremony of initiation into educational career ) and *samāvartana* ( the ceremony of the student's return from the teacher's house ).<sup>1</sup> The vernacular sources are silent on many of the sacraments mentioned by Raghunandana. It may be inferred here that Raghunandana was trying to put emphasis on the rites prescribed by the ancient *nivandhakāras*, whereas the Bengali works have simply thrown light on the local nature of these rites. Thus the rites as mentioned in the *Smṛtis* do not seem to have been uniformly practised throughout the country.

The description of marriage customs covers many pages of the Vaiṣṇava and Maṅgal poems. Hindu marriage of the period in question involved a long-drawn process of social performances. From the pompous description of the institution of marriage as given by Vijaya Gupta, it must not be inferred that this was exactly the real picture of the matrimonial ceremonies of the Hindus in general. It simply shows that the marriage of the wealthy persons was attended by an unlimited grandeur and pomp which involved huge expenditure—a fact much deplored by Br̥ṇḍāvanadās.<sup>2</sup> The poor had necessarily to minimize their matrimonial expenses. In the case of Chaitanya's first marriage, Vallabha Āchārya who was extremely poor, wanted to spare only five myrobalans for his daughter's marriage.<sup>3</sup> It is striking that the common features of medieval Hindu marriage are almost like their modern counterparts.

Marriage played a significant part in the socio-religious life of the Hindu which was based on the caste system and

1. *Saṁskāratattva* and *Malamāsa*°, cited in *J.A.S.B. op. cit.* p. 171 ; S. C. Bandyopadhyay : *op. cit.* pp. 76-82.
2. *Op. cit.* ādi, II, p. 11.
3. *Ibid.* ādi, IX, p. 60.

the four specified orders. Raghunandana deplors the celibacy which does not result from asceticism. Keeping in view the fundamental importance of the sacrament of marriage, the medieval *nivandhakāras* have discussed at considerable length the proper times of marriage, the fitness of boys and girls for marital life, the *sapiṇḍa* and *sagotra* relationships of the bride and the bridegroom, the question of dowry and different customs and socio-religious rites<sup>1</sup> connected with the ceremonial aspect of wedding. Raghunandana holds that girls should be married before puberty and that this age-limit does not apply to the girls for whom suitable brides are not easily available. The same *smārta* scholar approvingly cites the prescription of Samvarta that it is proper for young men to marry after they have completed their educational careers. We do not know if all the marriage regulations as laid down in the *Smṛti* writings were uniformly followed by the different sections of people. But it is not difficult to understand the mind which was responsible for framing the regulations.

Medieval *Smṛtis* show that the ceremony of marriage began with *nāndī-mukha* and ended with *patyabhivādana* or the formal salutation of the bride-groom to the bride. Other rites are *mukha-chandrikā* in which the bride and the bride-groom look at each other's face, the reception of the bride with such materials as *pādyā*, *arghya*, *āchamaniya* water and *madhuparka* and the ceremonial offering of the girl to the bridegroom followed by *pāṇi-grahaṇa* (the taking of the bridegroom's hand by the bride), *ashmārohaṇa* (the riding by the girl on a piece of stone) *lāja-homa* (throwing fried grains into fire by the girl), *saptapadi-gamana* (the girl proceeding seven steps with the assistance of the bride), *mūrdhābhiṣeka* (sprinkling sacred water on the heads of the couple), *mahāvīyāhṛti-homa*, *dhruvārundhatī-darshana* (the showing of *dhruva* or the Pole star and *Arundhatī* to the girl by the bride) and *patyabhivādana*. For a description of the different *smārta* marriage rites, see S. C. Bandyopadhyay : *op. cit.* pp. 47-74 and 82-85. For similar rites in ancient Bengal, cf. *History of Bengal*, I, p. 601 ff.

A marriage proposal was generally made to the girl's father through an intermediary who used to be a friend or a relative of the boy's father. A class of professional marriage brokers (*ghaṭak*) was not only common, but they often played a very important role in matrimonial negotiations. The astrologer was to fix the auspicious hour with reference to the *pañjī* (almanac) and *koṣṭhī* (horoscope) and also to the stars and signs of the Zodiac.<sup>1</sup> Freedom of marriage thus seems to have been restricted to a great extent. Marriage was a colourful ceremony with intermingling of religious rites and social customs which varied from place to place. It began with *adhivāsa*, a religious rite performed usually on the day preceding the date of marriage. Instrumental and vocal music accompanied it. The next ceremony was that of *bṛddhī*, when the father of the bride offered sacrifice and prayer in the names of the ancestors. This was followed by colouring the fig-leaf with vermilion, reciting prayers to sixteen divine mothers or *ṣoḍaśa-mātṛkū* and worshipping the earth. *Nāṇḍīmukha*, a *shrāddha* ceremony, celebrated on this occasion, was believed to have added to the pleasure and happiness of the region of the manes.<sup>2</sup> In the course of the whole ceremony, full jars, lamps, paddy, banana trees and various musical instruments were used possibly to add sanctity to the occasion.

There followed the ceremonial bath to which much importance was attached. It was attended by smearing the body of the bridegroom with paste prepared from sandal, turmeric and myrobalans. All this was done by the ladies who used to play significant parts in marriage affairs. When the bath was completely finished, the bridegroom used to put on fresh clothes and different ornaments including ear-rings, anklets and crown

1. Bṛṇḍāvanadas : *op. cit.* ādi, ix, pp. 59-60 : *Kavikañkan-chaṇḍī*, I, pp. 134-35 and II, pp. 366-68 and 382-83 ; Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 165-67.
2. Bṛṇḍāvanadas : *op. cit.* ādi, ix, p. 60 and xiii, pp. 92-93 ; Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 24-25 and 169-70 ; *Kavikañkan-chaṇḍī*, I, pp. 136-39 and II, pp. 385-89.

and also used perfumes like *auger* and *chua*. Then there followed the pompous bridal procession attended by the relatives and friends of the bridegroom, a good number of archers, *pāiks* and panegyrists. Elephants, cradles and horses were also profusely used on this occasion.<sup>1</sup>

*Maṅgalāchāra* or the ceremony of auspicious decoration, celebrated at the bride's house, presented really a colourful picture.<sup>2</sup> A detailed account of this is unnecessary, for it greatly resembled its modern counterpart. The bride used to put on numerous ornaments the list of which has been given in the literature of the time. *Maṅgalāchāra* was followed by the reception of the bridegroom by the father of the bride, when the priests recited the *vākya*, made argument, and celebrated what was known as *pādya*, *arghya*, *āchamana* and *madhuparka* (offer of some specified articles to gods in token of worship). Having walked round the bridegroom seven times, the bride received him with paddy, dubgrass and jute cloth. There was at this time the exchange of garlands between the two which indicated the union of the two lives. The religious formalities attending the ceremony were those of the recital of the hymn from the Vedas, playing on certain musical instruments and lighting up fire. The bride's father had then to offer her to the bridegroom by placing her hands on those of him and with these the formalities of marriage practically came to an end. The bridegroom used to receive as dowry certain things such as cows, land, bed, servants, water-vessels, clothes and ornaments. The bride was taken to his house where the couple were properly received by his mother accompanied by other invited women.<sup>3</sup> The ceremony of marriage thus marked the starting point of the conjugal life which was very often

1. Bṛṇḍāvanadās, *op. cit.* ādi, XIII, pp. 94-95 ; Vijaya Gupta, *op. cit.* pp. 171-72 and 179.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 182-83.

3. *Ibid.* pp. 26, 27, 183-84, 187, 194 and 195 ; Bṛṇḍāvanadās, *op. cit.* ādi, XIII, pp. 95-96.

happy and peaceful. After the death of the first wife, one could take a second one. This is illustrated by the life history of Shri-Chaitanya. It is necessary to say a few words about the position of Hindu women in the then society. Since those were peaceful times, women had to perform no outdoor works. The *māṅgal* poems of our period have given us the picture of an ideal woman who does not seem to have played any active part in the society and whose existence was felt only in the kitchen. But we have got no reason to overlook the importance of the female folk in society. The women of the Hindu society were affectionate mothers and devoted wives. Besides managing the household affairs quite thoroughly, they were helping their husbands in various ways. In the *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*, we find that Shachī, the mother of Chaitanya was thinking about the future of her son and requesting her husband to continue the education of Chaitanya even after it had been stopped by her husband.<sup>1</sup> One of the Chinese accounts has also thrown some light on the co-operation rendered by the wife to the management of the day-to-day affairs of the husband, which was her absolute monopoly. Cooking was the main concern in their routine-bound daily life. It was quite traditionally that women used to fast, observe *ekādashī* and perform similar other religious formalities.<sup>2</sup> The position of the conservative Hindu women has undergone very little change in the course of the few centuries.

The *smārta* rules and the legal system relating to such material affairs as inheritance, partition and property interests, clearly indicate that the independent position of women was hardly recognized in the society. Women could not participate in a number of religious rites and sacrifices except with the permission of their husbands.<sup>3</sup> Their right to property was restricted to a great extent. The *Dāyabhāga* of Jimūtavāhana grants the

1. *Op. cit.* 2di, vii, pp. 40 and 42.

2. Vijaya Gupta, *op. cit.* p. 164.

3. S. C. Bandyopadhyay; *op. cit.* p. 97.

widow no right to the sale, mortgage and gift of the property and her right to enjoyment is greatly conditioned by her performance of such religious rites as might bring spiritual benefit to the dead husband. Women were entitled to the possession of a specific kind of property technically called *strīdhana*.<sup>1</sup>

The *Smṛti* writers of the period in question believe that a woman has neither in this world nor in the world hereafter spiritual existence independent of her husband's. This attitude seems to have been responsible for attaching sanctity to the institution of Hindu marriage which is an irrevocable, human relationship. Raghunandana approves of divorce only under a few specific conditions including the pregnancy of the wife as a result of cohabitation with a man of lower caste, or with the son or the pupil of the husband.<sup>2</sup> The institution of *kulinism* and polygamy which prevailed in the medieval society, must have done hardship to women folk.

Dress, ornaments and toilets used by women have been traditionally mentioned in the literature of the time. These include jute cloth, cotton cloth, ring, necklace, nose-trinket, golden bracelet, ear-rings, golden *tathi*, *shāṅkhā*, *pāshalī*, *khāḍu*, crown, collyrium, lac, vermilion and musk mixed with sandal. The woman's hair properly combed and shaped in the form of chignon and pigtail with flowers and peacock feathers attached to them, was perfumed with auger and incense-smoke.<sup>3</sup> It should be mentioned in this connection that these ornaments and toilets were generally used on matrimonial occasions and in ordinary life, these must have been as simple as possible.

Widows generally used coarse jute-cloth, golden bracelets and *fāg*-powder as substitutes for *khani*, *shāṅkhā* and vermilion.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Ibid.* pp. 181-82 and 190-91 ; *History of Bengal*, 1, p. 610.

2. S. C. Bandyopadhyay : *op. cit.* p. 65.

3. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 26 and 187.

4. Vijaya Gupta, quoted by D.C. Sen : *Vaṅgabhāṣā O Sāhitya*, p. 108.

Although the institution of *satī* has been mentioned in some of the contemporary works,<sup>1</sup> it does not seem to have been universally practised in this country. When Jagannātha Mishra, father of Shri-Chaitanya died, his wife did not die with him. Again, the existence of the widow class occasionally referred to in the contemporary works presupposes that *satī* was not a regularly or uniformly practised institution. It was, however, religiously practised in other parts of India, both in the North and in the South. In fact, *satī* was a common practice in upper Indian Hindu society two centuries earlier, notice of which has been made by Ibn Baṭṭūṭah. The Mughals had tried to suppress the practice but without much success.<sup>2</sup> Raghunandana's prescription of severe austerities to be performed by the widow immediately after her husband's death,<sup>3</sup> clearly shows that the institution had no regular recognition in the *śāstra*. It seems that the institution was absent in many parts of the country, although it might have prevailed in some other parts.

Society was patriarchal and the joint family system was the order of the day. Whatever might have been the legal position and social status of the Hindu woman, the householder could not dispense with the service of the wife. The married life has been traditionally considered to be an essential part of the *varṇāśrama-dharma* which formed the basis of the ancient and medieval Hindu society. Raghunandana holds that

1. Mālādhara Vasu : *Shrikr̥ṣṇa-vijaya*, p. 294. Varthema gives a detailed description of the institution as practised at the city of 'Tarnassari'; *op. cit.* pp. 206-08.
2. *Advanced History of India*, pp. 376, 400, 496 and 568; Vincent A. Smith : *Akbar the Great Mughal*, pp. 226 and 382. Writing about 1667 A.D. Bernier, (quoted by J. N. Das Gupta : *Bengal in the Sixteenth Century A.D.* pp. 44-45, f.n.) says that the Muslim rulers did not like to stop *satī* "for fear of some revolt" and that they used to "hinder it as much as they can."
3. *Shuddhitattva*, quoted by Bhabatosh Bhattachayra, in *J.A.S.B.* 1953, no. 2, pp. 160-61.

there cannot be a house without a housewife. His eagerness to preserve the integrity of the traditional way of life is indicated by the prescription that one who has become a widower after the age of forty-eight, should be considered a *raṇḍā-shramī* or widower householder.<sup>1</sup>

Vaiṣṇava poems throw light on the relationship between the husband and the wife, which was one of understanding, love and affection. Without the co-operation of the wife, it was difficult for the husband to manage either ordinary domestic affairs or occasional socio-religious ceremonies. In addition to the husband, the wife and the children, the family included a number of other members such as the grand-father, the grand-mother, the manager of the household affairs and servants, both male and female.<sup>2</sup> Children, in general, reciprocated the instinctive love and affection of the parents. On the occasion of social ceremonies, it became the direct concern of the couple to see that the arrangements and invitations were in keeping with the status and dignity of the family concerned.<sup>3</sup> The head of the family had to be sometimes conscious of the sensibility of the neighbour, for the latter, if he was particularly an elderly man, might angrily demonstrate his mental susceptibility born of his pride and caste superiority.<sup>4</sup> When the religious preceptor or an ascetic came to visit the family, he was received with special obeisance. While the householder prostrated himself before the honoured guest, his wife would wash the latter's feet after placing him on a *piḍi* or wooden seat and spread

1. *Smṛtitattva*, quoted by S. C. Bandyopadhyay : *op. cit.* pp. 71 and 212.
2. Cf. for example, the families to which Chaitanya and Nityānanda belonged ; Chūḍāmaṇidāsa : *op. cit.* pp. 7-8, 17-18, 24, 33, 60 etc.
3. *Ibid.* p. 18.
4. Cf. the angry outburst of Ākhaṇḍala Āchārya at the house of Nityānanda ; *ibid.* pp. 79-80.



out a rug for him on the floor of the outer apartment of the house.<sup>1</sup>

The rich, both Hindus and Muslims, used to live in brick-built houses and the poor had their houses built of bamboo with straw thatchings.<sup>2</sup> The ruins of the pre-Mughal architecture scattered over the different places of Bengal clearly show that brick was profusely used for the construction of these edifices. Moreover, the Chinese account, written in the middle of the fifteenth century, mentions that rich people, particularly the kings, were residing in palatial buildings, made of bricks and decorated internally in floral designs and animal patterns. These houses had flights of steps and flat roofs resting on a number of pillars.<sup>3</sup> But the bamboo huts were of general use and some of them were "so constructed that the cost of a single one will be five thousand rupees or more and they last a long time."<sup>4</sup> Abū'l Faḍl seems to have referred to the bamboo houses which were specially constructed by the rich. The huts of the poor must have been of a poorer nature, for they could hardly spend any extravagant sum on their construction. The *chouchālā* bamboo houses were so famous that they did not fail to influence the brick and stone architecture of Bengal. The house had several well-defined parts such as the bed-room with a courtyard in front of it, the living-room with a raised varandah attached to it, the kitchen and the *chaṇḍī-maṇḍapa* which, apart from housing the family deity, used to serve the purpose of the guest-room<sup>5</sup> particularly on the occasion of social gatherings. Houses having elevated roofs and arranged in systematic rows<sup>6</sup> were considered to be ideal ones. A sense of refinement and taste was sometimes displayed in the disposition of the different

1. *Ibid.* pp. 7-8 for the special forms with which Mādhavendra Purī was received by the parents of Nityānanda ; see also K. M. Ashraf : *op. cit.* p. 325.
2. *Ā'in*, II, p. 134.
3. *Viśva-Bhāratī Annals*, *op. cit.* pp. 121, 124, 130-31.
4. *Ā'in*, II, p. 134.
5. *Chūḍamaṇidās* : *op. cit.* pp. 7, 19, 33-34, 47 etc.
6. *Vipradās* : *op. cit.* p. 143 and *Shaiḵh* Faiḍullāh : *op. cit.* p. 34.

parts of the house. In this connection, we may notice the description of Chaitanya's house given by Chudāmaṇidās : "The fine house had a gate on the south and another on the east. Beyond the eastern gate, there was a courtyard."<sup>1</sup> Inside the bedroom of the rich, one could find a richly decorated bedstead, beautiful pillows, different jars and mosquito curtains made of silk or jute.<sup>2</sup> But the requirement of the poor in this respect must have been as limited as possible.

Bengali food has not changed materially in the course of the last few centuries. Rice, as now, was the staple food of the people. Rice soaked in water (*paṇṭābhāt* or *āmāni*) was the breakfast not only of the poorer class as now, but the richer section of the community also used to take it with relish. *Ṣorasha vyāñjana* or sixteen dishes were common in rich Hindu houses and these included various vegetables, fish, milk, meat, fruits, curd, butter, cakes and sweetmeats. Ghee, oil, sugar, salt, chilly and different spices were used in preparing food.<sup>3</sup> After finishing the meals, people used to take betel-leaves which were also supplied to the guests on festive occasions. The list of Bengali eatables given in the *maṅgal* poems, represents a picture which is more ideal than real. Bengali food was simple, palatable and nourishing. Adulteration of food had not yet started. The culinary art was the exclusive concern of the women folk who used to attach religious devotion to the task. In fact, like every institution of Bengali life, the institution of cooking was also connected with semi-religious ceremonies. Lighting of fire in the kitchen had associated with it a number of elaborate ceremonies which included going round the fire seven times and prayer to the god of fire.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Op. cit.* pp. vi and 44.

2. Bṛndāvanadās : *op. cit.* madhya, vii, pp. 164-65 ; *Kavikaṇkan-chaṇḍī*, ii, p. 520.

3. Bṛndāvanadās : *op. cit.* madhya, vi, p. 158, viii, p. 178 and ix, p. 182 ; *Kavikaṇkan-chaṇḍī* ii, pp. 510-13 and 515-16 ; Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 96-97.

4. *Ibid.* p. 96 ; see also *Kavikaṇkan-chaṇḍī*, ii, pp. 514-15.

The Hindus had various festivals and social functions one of which was connected with the worship of *Durgā*, celebrated with much pomp and grandeur. It should be mentioned in this connection that Raghunandana has devoted a considerable part of his work, *Tithitattva* to the description of the festivals of *Rāmanavamī* and *Durgotsava*. *Chaṇḍī-maṅgal*, *Manasā-maṅgal* and *Shaiva* songs and the songs recounting the achievements of the Pāla kings of ancient Bengal, were sung by *pālās* by the singers or *gāyans* who seem to have acquired much proficiency in the art of singing.<sup>1</sup> Theatrical performances gained much popularity among the people. Chaitanya used to take part in some of them. The subjects of these dramatic performances were various *paurāṇik* stories such as *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* and *Lakṣmī-Vijaya*, which were attended by the Hindus and the Muslims alike.<sup>2</sup>

Hindus worshipped then, as now, a number of gods and goddesses including Shivaliṅga, Shiva, *Durgā*, *Chaṇḍī*, *Viṣṇu*, *Nārāyaṇa*, *Vyāsa*, *Brahmā*, *Agni*, *Shitalā* *Śaṣṭhī* and the *Gaṅgā*.<sup>3</sup> Raghunandana includes among the religious rites to be performed by the orthodox Hindus, worship of *Śaṣṭhī*, *Viṣṇu*, *Manasā*, *Kṛṣṇa*, *Durgā*, *Yama*, *Sarasvatī*, *Sūrya*, *Bhīṣma*, *Shiva*, *Shitalā*, *Rāma* and *Madana*.<sup>4</sup> *Manasā* was one of the most important and powerful goddesses of the Hindus. The composition of poems on *Manasā* by Vijaya Gupta and *Vipradās* towards the end of the fifteenth century, is a clear indication of the importance attached to the worship of the serpent goddess by the people of East and West Bengal who used to believe in her supernatural powers. Certain popular beliefs centred round the worship of *Manasā*. It was thought that *Manasū* used to be

1. *Bṛṇḍāvanadās* : *op. cit.* ādi, ii, p. 11 ; madhya, viii, p. 171 ; xiii, p. 210 ; xxiii, p. 266.
2. *Kṛṣṇadās Kaviraj* : *op. cit.* madhya, xv, p. 167 and antya, v, p. 288 ; *Bṛṇḍāvanadās* : *op. cit.* madhya, xviii.
3. *Ibid.* ādi, ii, pp. 11, 12, 13 ; iii, p. 19 ; iv, p. 21 ; vii, p. 48 ; madhya, v, p. 156, vi, p. 160 etc. ; *Vijaya Gupta* : *op. cit.* pp. 137 and 162.
4. S. Bandyopadhyay : *op. cit.* pp. 207-209.

present at those places where songs were sung about her, to give boon to her devotees and curse her enemies. According to the popular belief, she could cure diseased persons, give children to the childless and liberate the prisoners.<sup>1</sup> She could be worshipped with such materials as incense, lamp, sunned rice, sandal, different flowers and the sacrifice of buffaloes and goats. The ceremonies connected with the worship in West Bengal were probably less pompous than those in East Bengal.<sup>2</sup> The Hindus who worshipped the river Ganges, held its water to be sacred and wished to pass their last days and die near this river. Raghunandana has dwelt at a considerable length, on the religious efficacy of bathing in the water of the Ganges and worshipping it with devotion.<sup>3</sup>

The customs of Hindu society were intermingled with prejudices. It was believed that musical performances would lead to the increase of the price of paddy and create famine in the country.<sup>4</sup> If the pitcher that used to be kept on the exit-door ( *yātrāghaṭ* ) was broken by any accident, or if the head touched the upper doorframe, the journey was considered to be inauspicious. There appears to be no end of inauspicious signs. The chirping of the house lizard on the left side, the movement of the snake on the right and the howling of jackals, were all considered as indicating that the journey would not be an auspicious one. The falling of vermilion from women's head and of bracelets from their hands and the breaking of *shāṅkhās* were regarded as inauspicious signs. In the morning people did not like to look at the face of a childless man who was believed to be helpless in the next world.<sup>5</sup> Some of

1. Vipradās : *op. cit.* pp. 63, 70 etc. ; Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* p. 4.
2. *Ibid.* p. 52 ; Vipradās : *op. cit.* p. 62.
3. Barbosa : *op. cit.* II, p. 134 ; de Barros, quoted by M.L. Dames : *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, II, appendix-I, p. 245 ; *Tirthatattva*, and *Prāyashchittatattva*, cited in *J.A.S.B.* 1953, *op. cit.* pp. 163 and 164.
4. Bṛṇḍāvanadās : *op. cit.* ॐdi, xiv, p. 105, and madhya, viii, p. 176.
5. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 98, 100, 122, 162 and 180.

these beliefs are still lingering in a modified form\* in the society of modern rural Bengal. Vṛndāvanadās who used to regard Shri-Chaitanya as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, has associated a number of supernatural signs with the childhood of Chaitanya.<sup>1</sup>

The superstitious beliefs and ideas of the people seem to have considerably influenced the *nivandhakāras* of the time who have prescribed remedies for the bad effects of ominous incidents. Raghunandana thinks that the falling of a particular variety of birds or animals on the head or their entry into the house and the untimely appearance of flowers and fruits are unpropitious ; that one can ward off their impact on human life by worshipping several deities and feeding Brahmins and presenting gold and cows to them and that failure to perform the remedying rites will bring death to the house-holder.<sup>2</sup> Shrinātha Āchāryachūdāmāṇi, a contemporary of Raghunandana, has associated superstitious practices with marriage customs. He thinks that seven clods prepared from the earth taken from *urvarā bhūmi* (fertile land), *gochāraṇa bhūmi* (pasture-land) *vedi* (raised ground meant for religious sacrifices), *vikrayasthāna* (bazar), *hrada* (lake), *ṛṣara-bhūmi* (barren land), *chatuspatha* (converging point of four roads) and *shmashāna* (place for cremation) will be quite helpful in testing the internal qualities and deficiencies of the girl for whom marriage proposal has been made.<sup>3</sup> The Hindu legal system in which the medieval and ancient Bengali mind was at its best, has provisions for certain divine evidence or *divya*<sup>4</sup> which appears, to the modern mind, to be a bundle of superstitions.

The system of education followed in the Hindu society was different in many respects from its modern counterpart.

1. *Op. cit.* ādi, II, pp. 20-25.

2. S. C. Bandyopadhyay : *op. cit.* p. 206.

3. *Ibid.* pp. 54-55.

4. Raghunandana has devoted the *Divyatattva* to the discussion of these evidences. For a detailed account, see *ibid.* p. 165 ff.

Village schools were common in those days. They were attended by a large number of students coming not only from the richer class in the society but also from the poorer section as well. Birth in a low class, such as that of *vene*, was no bar to one's studying *shāstras* in East Bengal, although this was frowned upon in orthodox Hindu society where the study of the *shāstras* was an exclusive privilege of the Brahmins.<sup>1</sup> The education of the Hindu boy began with the ceremony called *hātekhāḍi* and he used to learn the alphabets possibly at his own home.<sup>2</sup> When this initial stage was over, the boy could go to join one of the neighbouring *ṭols* conducted individually by a Brahmin paṇḍit. Since the pattern of education was thoroughly classical, he had to learn grammar, logic and rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> It seems that the Vedas together with their commentaries were taught at a higher stage of the students' intellectual maturity. The different systems of Indian philosophy such as *Nyāya*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Pātañjala*, *Mīmāṃsā* and *Vaiśeṣika* were also studied by the advanced students.<sup>4</sup> The intellectual glory of Navadvīpa, which was the centre of intense classical learning, is brilliantly reflected in the different pages of the *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*.<sup>5</sup> It seems that students from East Bengal used to go to receive education at Navadvīpa, for the eastern region seems to have suffered from cultural bankruptcy at this period. Brahminical culture concentrated itself at Navadvīpa and also possibly at the village of Rāmakeli where Rūpa and Sanātana brought a number of learned Brahmins from the different parts of Bengal.<sup>6</sup>

1. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 51 and 95 ; Bṛndāvanadās : *op. cit.* adi, xiv, p. 107.
2. *Ibid.* adi, v, p. 31.
3. *Ibid.* adi, vii, pp. 43-45, 49 ; x, pp. 66-67 and xi, pp. 78-79.
4. *Ibid.* adi, xi, p. 80.
5. *Ibid.* adi, ii, p. 11 ; vii, pp. 43 and 44 ; xi, p. 76.
6. *Ibid.* antya, iv, p. 348 ; Sukumar Sen : *Madhyayuger Vāṅglā O Vāṅglā*, p. 23.

In spite of this higher level of intellect attained by a group of people, moral degradation seems to have set in. While the upper class Muslims had associated themselves very closely with drinking and concubinage, the latter being the main source of their sexual enjoyment, the Hindus had adopted certain practices quite akin to those of the Muslims. The Vaiṣṇava literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has deplored the moral depravity of Jagāi and Mādhāi who were practising all that was against the principles of Hinduism and the rules of morality. Bṛndāvanadās says that they were always taking wine and beef and committing theft, although they were Brahmins by caste.<sup>1</sup> Lochanadās maintains that these two brothers were enjoying the company of Brahmin and Muslim women and also the women of their superiors and that killing cows, Brahmins and women had become quite usual with them.<sup>2</sup> It seems that these Brahmin brothers were greatly influenced by the upper class Muslims of Gauḍ. One of the forces undermining the then Hindu society was Tantricism. Bṛndāvanadās has deplored Tantric practices in the *Chaitanya-bhāgavat*.<sup>3</sup> The standard of morality, specially in the mercantile community, was not high. Prostitution came into vogue, but this was probably absent in the rural society. This particular institution was connected with trade centres where the prostitutes used to have separate quarters allotted to them. Though the institution was absent in rural society, the peaceful lives in the villages were often disturbed by their women folk being kidnapped.<sup>4</sup>

Bengali Hindu society of the period in question was essentially conservative. It could hardly transcend the barriers that were created around it by the ancient *śāstrakāras*. Our contention is borne out, if we try to get an idea about the

1. *Op. cit.* madhya, XIII, p. 205.

2. *Chaitanya-maṅgal*, p. 26, madhya.

3. *Op. cit.* madhya, VIII, pp. 172 and 176.

4. Vijaya Gupta, pp. 72, 80-81 and 153; *Chāṇḍi-maṅgal*, I, p. 273.

Hindu society from the writings of the celebrated *nivandhakāra*, Raghunandana who composed his works on *Smṛti* in the first half of the sixteenth century. Like his predecessors, Raghunandana prescribes five *mahāyajñas* ( i. e. teaching, propitiation of the manes, sacrifices, food offerings to animals and hospitality ) to be regularly practised by a Brahmin so that he can relieve himself of the sins resulting from the use of the five necessary elements found in his own house. He lays down the rule that no one should take food without offering it to the gods. He has given a long list of persons whose food cannot be partaken of. *Shrāddha* gifts should be made to the manes in the full-moon *tithis* of the months of Āṣāḍh ( June-July ), Kārttika ( October-November ) and Māgha ( January-February ).<sup>1</sup> He says that the non-performance of the daily duties prescribed by him will lead to the downfall of the man concerned.<sup>2</sup>

The socio-religious rituals which Raghunandana prescribes for the orthodox Hindus, cover almost all the months of the year and include the observance of a number of *bratas* combined with fasting, gifts, worship of gods and goddesses and several other religious practices and abstentions. These are as follows :<sup>3</sup> The devout Hindu will take bath early in the morning in the month of Vaishākha, present water vessels to Brahmins, eat *nim*-leaves with lentil or *masura* and wash Viṣṇu with cold water. Those who want to have beautiful children, should worship Śaṣṭhī on the sixth day of the bright half of the month of Jyaiṣṭha. On the fourteenth day of the same bright half following the full moon of the previous month, women have to perform *Sāvitrī-brata* in order to avoid widowhood. Holy bathing in the Ganges and other rivers allays ten sins of the body, mind and speech. The chief features

1. *Prāyashchittatattva*, *Ahṛīkatattva*, *Malamāsatattva* and *Tīrthātattva*, cited in *J.A.S.B.* 1953, pp. 160, 165 and 170.
2. *Ekādashātattva*, cited in *J.A.S.B.* 1953, pp. 192-93.
3. S. C. Bandyopadhyay : *op. cit.* pp. 207-08. For similar rites prescribed by Jimūtavāhana, cf. *History of Bengal*, I, 607-08.



of *chāturmāsya* rite, which begins in Āṣādh and ends in Kārttika, are the worship of Viṣṇu, bathing in the Ganges, cutting hair and nails and abstinence from taking molasses, oil and cooked eatables. Shrāvaṇa is meant for the worship of Manasā. The observance of the birth day of Śrī-Kṛṣṇa (*janmāṣṭamī*) on the eighth day of the dark half of Bhādra, will have the effect of expiating sins. The worship of Durgā and the festival of *kojāgara* take place in Āshvina. The ceremonies and festivals of the month of Kārttika include *dīpānvīta* or illumination of houses, *dyūta-pratipada* in which people play with dice with the object of ascertaining their luck and misfortune and *bhrātṛ-dvītiyā* in which women worship Yama and entertain their brothers. The festival of *navānna* or new rice should be celebrated in Agrahāyana. The month of Māgha has *raṭanti-chaturdashī* or morning bath on the fourteenth day of the dark half, *shrīpañchamī* for worshipping Sarasvatī, bathing and the worship of the Sun on the *Māghī-saptamī*, *bratas* on the occasions of *vidhāna-saptamī* and *ārogya-saptamī* and the worship of Bhīṣma. The *Shivarātri* festival takes place in Phālguna. Then there are the worship of Shītalā, *Vāruṇī* festival, *ashokāṣṭamī*, *Rāmanavamī*, and the worship of Madana or Cupid, all in the month of Chaitra.

While some of the rites are either expiatory or propitiatory in nature, others seem to have been observed with the definite object of getting some desires or material aspirations fulfilled. It is not clearly known whether the numerous rites and ceremonies were uniformly performed by the Hindus of Bengal ; but their inclusion in the *smārta* socio-religious code is quite significant. As a matter of fact, the *Smṛti* writings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries give clear indications about the attitude of the *smārta* scholars to the society in which they were living. The *nivandhakāras* wanted to regulate every detail of social behaviour strictly in accordance with a fixed body of religious principles dominated by a sort of rigid formalism. The rigidity of the religious rites which the individual *Smṛti*-writer insists upon, is perhaps explained by his general adhe-

rence to the earlier socio-religious regulations which he could not change at his sweet will. That the uncompromising nature of the earlier *smārta* laws had led to the growth of certain social problems, seems clear from the writings of Raghunandana who tends to relax the regulations relating to the proper age-limit of the marriageable girl, the Brahmin's contact with the Shūdra and the place of the widower of an advanced age within the fold of Brahminical *āshramas*.

The picture of the Hindu society which we get in the *Smṛti* writings may be partly idealistic ; but they reveal the tendency of the age in which the *Smṛti* literature was produced. The conservatism characterizing the Hindu community may be attributed to caste rigidity and the tendency of the people to put extraordinary emphasis on the orthodox regulations embodied in the ancient *śāstras*. Again the Brahmins seem to have been actuated by self-interest in framing socio-religious regulations with a view to retaining their privileged position in the society. While detailing the religious duties and privileges of a Shūdra, Raghunandana points out that he can enjoy the fruits of *dharma* by worshipping gods and Brahmins.<sup>1</sup> Brahmins are thus placed on an equal level with gods. While discussing the conservative nature of the Hindu society, we should not overlook the noble virtues it cultivated. Putting much emphasis on the religious efficacy of gifts and penances and dealing with the efficacy of selfless actions,<sup>2</sup> the *Smṛtikāras* seem to have placed an ideal before the people. As already pointed out, Raghunandana quotes socio-religious regulations from ancient *Smṛtis*, Epics, *Purāṇas* and *Nivandhas* in support of his own prescriptions which are intended to preserve the purity and integrity of the Brahminical society. But the presence of Tantric elements and non-Aryan deities within the fold of Brahminism, indicates that it

1. *Mahamāsātattva*, cited in *J.A.S.B.* 1953, p. 164.

2. *Ibid.* p. 165. So far as these ideas are concerned, Raghunandana seems to have been influenced by the *Bhāgavat* which he quotes frequently.

was not easy to achieve the desired object. As mentioned elsewhere, Raghunandana provides for Tantric initiation and the worship of Shītalā and Manasā. The process of non-Aryan impact on Brahminism must have started in an earlier period. It is quite interesting to note that Jīmūtavāhana prescribes in his *Kālaviveka*, the worship of the serpent goddess Manasā.<sup>1</sup> We have already discussed how the impact of Islām had led to the regrouping of the Brahminical population.

There is hardly any reason to believe that the elaborate Brahminical regulations that we find in *Smṛti* writings were followed by the people belonging to the lower grades of Hindu society. The common mass who remained outside the pale of Brahminical culture, had, in all probability, simple primitive beliefs and practices, tribal gods and goddesses, unsophisticated institutions and all that combined to build up their folk culture.

### III

Social contact between the Hindus and the Muslims of the period in question is not without interest to a student of history. Though possibly the catholic influence of Ṣufī-ism made Hindu pantheism less repugnant to the Muslims, clash between the two sections of population was not totally absent. In fact, almost all the writers of *Manasā-maṅgal* poems have devoted a chapter to the conflict between the two communities. Touchy and conservative as the Hindus were about their castes, the Muslim administrator took the easiest way of inflicting the severest injury to them by desecrating their castes, although this was neither encouraged nor supported by the sultāns whose attitude towards the non-Muslims in general appears to have been one of sympathy and understanding. In the *Manasā-maṅgal* of Vijaya Gupta, the Muslim *qāḍī* who was the local administrator in a village called Ḥusainhāṭī, had no objection to the Hindu practices being observed ; but the *mullā* or the Musalman

1. *History of Bengal*, I, p. 606.

priest, whose care it was to see Islām well-established, admonished the *qāqī* for his slackness in not preventing the worship of the earthen vessel dedicated to the serpent goddess. Religious fanaticism once roused, played its usual havoc. Whoever then was found with *tulsī*-leaves was taken before the *qāqī* and mercilessly beaten. Brahmins had to lose their *paitā* or holy thread. They, therefore, made it a point to live always quite away from the Muslims of that particular locality.<sup>1</sup> The story given by Vipradās,<sup>2</sup> does not differ much from Vijaya Gupta's version. It appears from a careful study of these works that the personal whim and religious fanaticism of some of the Muslim officers were responsible for these communal conflicts. Again, there were cases of communal disturbances because of purely political reasons.

The Brahmins seem to have constituted a small minority group in the general mass of the population, the majority of which must have been lower class Hindus. The conflicts between the Muslims and the Brahmins, discussed in a previous chapter were due to certain socio-political reasons which did not probably influence the social relationship between the Muslims and the lower class Hindus. Furthermore, we have hardly any reason to magnify the incidental cases of religious riots which we come across in the vernacular literature of the time, for these do not appear to have influenced the whole course of sociological evolution. The Hindus and the Muslims, many of whom were possibly born of Hindu mothers or their descendants, lived together and both co-operated in the different aspects of national life. It has already been conclusively shown that many of the Hindus were holding important governmental offices under the Husain Shāhī rulers who must have prepared a congenial atmosphere for *rapprochement* between the two major communities. The attitude of the ruling class to its non-Muslim subjects is clearly revealed through the patronage they rendered to the cause of Hindu culture by encouraging the translation of the *Mahābhārat* and

1. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* pp. 54-61.

2. *Op. cit.* pp. 63-66.

the composition of the *Vidyā-Sundara*, which has some indirect relation with the worship of Kālī.<sup>1</sup> Had the Hindus and the Muslims been always fighting, the Hindu poets of the period would not have eulogized the Muslim rulers.

The Hindus and the Muslims influenced one another's life. There was a considerable number of Muslims with local nomenclature.<sup>2</sup> In the rural areas they lived quite peacefully and there was happy relationship among them. The *qāḍī* of Navadvīpa, even when attacked by Shri-Chaitanya and his followers, did not forget this. Addressing Chaitanya, he said : "So far as village relationship is concerned, Chakravartī is my uncle. Village relationship is purer than blood relationship. Nīlāmbara Chakravartī is your maternal grandfather. So you are my nephew".<sup>3</sup> The common Musalman joined the social ceremonies of the Hindus and even the bridal procession of a rich Hindu would not be complete without their presence.<sup>4</sup> It is mentioned in the Vaiṣṇava literature that the Muslims also enjoyed the *saṅkīrtana* performed by the Vaiṣṇavas.<sup>5</sup> The relation between the Hindus and the Muslims was thus cordial and the scenes of fanaticism were rare.

1. See the text of *Vidyā-Sundara* in *Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1364 B.S., I, pp. 115-17.
2. Two of the inscriptions of this period record the name of one Bibi Mālātī who constructed a mosque in the reign of Maḥmūd Shāh III and a shed for drinking water in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh; see the old Maldah inscription dated 938/1531; *J.A.S.B.* 1874, p. 308 and Gauḍ inscription dated 941/1535; *J.A.S.B.* 1872, p. 339. The lady was possibly a Muslim. This is evidenced by the construction of a mosque by her. She could hardly be a Hindu lady, for the construction of a mosque is not at all usual with a Hindu. The name Mālātī is obviously a local term which indicates Hindu influence on Muslim society. The name of the Muslim weaver as given in Vijaya Gupta's work was Svodhan; *op. cit.* p. 59. It is a Hindu name.
3. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : *op. cit.* ādi, xvii, p. 65.
4. Vijaya Gupta : *op. cit.* p. 179.
5. Bṛndāvanadās : *op. cit.* ādi, xvii, p. 67.

In the field of culture, there was understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims. We have already suggested that the Hindu officials had to learn Persian which was the court language. The knowledge of this language seems to have developed in the minds of some of the upper class Hindus, a genuine sympathy for Persian culture. This explains why they were reading *Mathnawī*, the famous poetical work of the Persian poet Jalāl-ud-dīn Rūmī. The Hindu poets of the age did not hesitate to use in their works loan words from Arabic and Persian.<sup>1</sup> Some of the Muslim poets and scholars seem to have had thorough acquaintance with Sanskrit language and Hindu mythology. We may cite here the name of Sābirid Khān, the fifteenth or sixteenth century Bengali poet, who composed a poem on the romantic story of Vidyā and Sundara. The whole poem is interspersed with Sanskrit verses probably of the poet's own composition.<sup>2</sup> The language of the poem is Sanskritized Bengali with a rare use of Arabic or Persian words. Sābirid Khān's knowledge of Hindu mythological stories is proved beyond doubt, for, in the opening section of the poem, he does not fail to mention certain incidents connected with the lives of the legendary kings like Dīlipa and Dasharatha.<sup>3</sup> The poet does not hesitate to tell us that the origin of the story narrated in his work, is connected with the worship of Pārvatī.<sup>4</sup> Thus we can glean from Sābirid's work, some ideas as to the poet's attitude to the Hindu culture. We have discussed in a previous chapter how Islamic mysticism had absorbed yogic and tantric ideas and practices.

1. The terms like *kalima*, *nikāḥ*, *ruzah*, *darbish*, *kitāb*, *Qur'ān*, *salām*, *ghulām* and *masjid* are used by Vipradās : *op. cit.* pp. 63-70; it is interesting to note that the Persian term, *Sar-i-khail*, which is, as already seen, an official title, became a synonym for the manager of household affairs in some of the conservative Hindu families; cf. Chūḍāmanidās : *op. cit.* p. 24.
2. *Sāhitya Patrikā*, 1st issue, pp. 96-114; for Sanskrit shlokas, see pp. 96, 104, 108, 110, 111, 112 and 113.
3. *Ibid.* p. 97.
4. *Ibid.* pp. 97-98.

## IV

The Portuguese had not yet become a social class in Bengal. They were connected with trade and piracy and their stay in this country was circumscribed due to the hostility of the ruling class and the Arab and Persian merchants. It was only in the beginning of the seventeenth century that they began to lead a regular social life in their settlements. Of course, they were given the custom houses of Sāt-gāon and Chittagong and were allowed to collect revenues from the people of the adjoining localities. Unfortunately nothing is known about the relation of these Portuguese farmers with the local people. But this seems to have been far from friendly, for their hostility to the sultāns of Bengal and Arab merchants is proved beyond doubt.<sup>1</sup> Their activities in the period in question had both religious and commercial aspects. Following the expulsion of the Arabs from the Andalusian peninsula, they seem to have declared *Crusades* against the Muslims wherever they could be found.<sup>2</sup> But the economic side of the question cannot be ignored. The Portuguese came to the East in search of wealth. Finding that the field of maritime commerce in Bengal was occupied by the Arabs, they turned hostile to them.

Varthema found in the city of 'Banghella' a few Nestorian Christians who were dealers in silk stuffs, aloë-wood, benzoin and musk. They had come from the city of Sarnau and were subject to the 'great Khan' of Cathai. They put on red caps and folded jerkins having sleeves quilted with cotton. Although they did not use shoes, they had "breeches made of silk, similar to those worn by mariners, which breeches are all full of jewels." They took meals at tables and ate "every kind of

1. Campos : *op. cit.* pp. 27-36; *History of Bengal*, II, p. 351 ff.; *supra*, pp. 31 and 86-87.

2. While visiting Malabar, the Portuguese traveller Barbosa, describes the 'Moors' as the followers of "the abominable Mafamede", *op. cit.* II, p. 3.

flesh." Following the practice of the Armenians, they used to write from right to left.<sup>1</sup> About their religious practices and beliefs, Varthema tells us that they believed in the Trinity, twelve Apostles and four Evangelists and had baptism with water. As orthodox Christians, they would "keep the Nativity and the Passion of Christ, and observe our Lent and other Vigils in the course of the year."<sup>2</sup> It seems that these Christian merchants were but occasional visitors and not permanent settlers in this country.

## V

One could notice points of difference between the social customs and dialects of East Bengal and those of West Bengal. The people of the western part of the country had a chronic dislike for East Bengal dialect and the people who spoke it and regarded them, then as now, as Vāṅgāla.<sup>3</sup> Chaitanya used to speak tauntingly of the *Vaṅgadeshī* people residing at Navadvīpa, whereas Kavikaṅkan and Ketakādas Kṣemānanda have sneered at this peculiar local language which they have jokingly imitated in their renowned works.<sup>4</sup> But these differences did not stand in the way of the development of cultural relations between the two parts of the country. Chaitanya's tour over East Bengal which took place in the early part of his life, had, no doubt, some cultural and educational significance.<sup>5</sup> Vaiṣṇavism had also claimed subsequently a good number of followers in Sylhet and Chittagong.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the educational centres of Navadvīpa and Shāntipur used to attract students from this part.

1. Varthema : *op. cit.* pp. 212-14.

2. *Ibid.* p. 213.

3. Bṛndāvanadas : *op. cit.* ādi, xii, p. 88.

4. *Kavikaṅkan-chaṇḍī*, ii, p. 655; *Manasā-maṅgal* of Ketakādas Kṣemānanda, i, p. 211. The two works have preserved the specimens of medieval East Bengal dialect only in a corrupt form, for the poets composing them, had no direct knowledge about it.

5. Bṛndāvanadas : *op. cit.* ādi, xii, pp. 85-88.

6. *Ibid.* ādi, ii, p. 10 and ix, p. 62. See also *Shrichaitanya-pāriṣada-janmasthāna-nirūpaṇa*, S.P.P. 1317 B.S., 4th issue, p. 223.



The life of Bengal with many of its customs and institutions was thus a chequered one. The ancient territorial divisions such as Rāḍh, Varendra and Vaṅga had not yet disappeared. But they were welded together into a greater geographical unit roughly corresponding to the territorial extent of modern Bengal. The term *Bengala* or Bengal, which had already evolved, was now being applied to the whole tract of land extending from Chittagong to Mandāran and from the Bay of Bengal to the hills of Assam.<sup>1</sup> What is of more importance is that Bengal had by then developed a language of her own which could be uniformly followed by the poets of the time.<sup>2</sup> The Bengalis had thus several factors common in their lives. These were a single contiguous territory to live in, a common literary language and a common political power to govern them. These served as powerful bonds of union and gave an integrity to their character. This was no mean achievement to which the ruling power must have made direct contribution. The Husain Shāhi period seems to have marked a definite stage in the growth of the Bengali nation over which the waves of Afghān conquest and the subsequent Mughal imperialism seem to have thrown cold water. The ruling authority was surrounded on all sides by a number of actively hostile countries on whom it was persistently trying to put a check. In doing so, it had to concern itself with the internal peace and integrity of the country which it could attain by promoting the cause of local culture and looking to the interest of the people. Thus the subjects were drawn closer to the ruling power with whom they had genuine reason to sympathize. Thus sympathy with a common ruling power seems to have generated a sense of unity among the people.

1. The Husain Shāhi kingdom has been called the kingdom of Bengal or *Bengala* by Barbosa, *op. cit.* I, p. 135, by Bābur : *op. cit.* II, p. 482 and also by de Barros.
2. The language of the *Parāgalī Mahābhārat* and the *Ashvamedha Parva* written in East Bengal, does not differ much from the language used by Vipradās, the West Bengal poet of the period under review.

## CHAPTER X

### *CONCLUDING REMARKS*

Ḥusain Shāhī rule in Bengal was characterized by the territorial expansion of the country, stabilization of administration, and, certain significant developments in respect of religion, literature, arts and economy. The military success of the first two rulers of the period under discussion was, in a large measure, due to their diplomatic skill and the decline of the Lūdis, the Sharqīs and the Khens. It resulted in the inclusion, within the political boundaries of Bengal, of the countries upto the confluence of the Ghogra and the Ganges in the west, Chittagong in the east and Kāmṛūpa in the north. Ḥusain Shāh's defeat in upper Brahmaputra valley appears to have been considerably compensated by his hold on these regions possessing either strategic or commercial importance. The political conflict which had been going on between the Sulṭānate of Delhi and the kingdom of Bengal, found its culmination in the extension of the frontier of the latter across the regions beyond Bhāgalpur and in the assumption of the title of *khālīfatullāh* by Ḥusain Shāh—a diplomatic move reminding us of the course of historical orientation followed by Charlemagne who set himself up against the emperor of Constantinople by taking the title of Roman Emperor

and Augustus.<sup>1</sup> Though merely a fiction, the title of *khālī-fatullāh* was expected to command wide respect with the Sunni Muslims whose sentiment the Bengal ruler appears to have utilized to suit his political ends. Consideration shown to the last *Sharqī* sultān who was allowed to establish a sort of a refugee government in Bhāgalpur with the right to issue coins, immediately after he had lost his kingdom, was perhaps closely linked up with the deliberate policy of detaching Bengal from North Indian imperialism. The shadow of *Sharqī* monarchy lingering at Bhāgalpur must have held out a threat to the *Lūdī* rulers, for the erstwhile rival of Delhi power, though kept in cold storage, was yet to give up his claims to sovereignty over Jaunpur.

The plan of extensive conquests and defence measures against Delhi rulers, adopted by the rulers of the period in question, needed the introduction of secular principles in administration. The military governors of foreign origin whose names and titles abound in epigraphic records, continued, no doubt, to carry on routine work of administration. They formed the outer crust of the administrators' circle. The local Hindus of Brahminical and Kāyastha castes who constituted the core of the society and who formed the link between the ruler and the lower grades of population, had to be given due recognition. Such a secular policy was inherent in the logic of Bengal history. Knowing as they did the physical configuration of the country and the mind of the people, the local administrators were allowed to hold key positions in the structure of the state. And as such they could help the Muslim rulers, to a great extent, in bringing about the political consolidation which the latter were aiming at.

Now that her isolation from North India had reached its culminating point, Bengal could discover her cultural identity and find herself on her own. The literary renaissance which characterized the period in question, was but a flowering of

1. Henri Pirenne : *Medieval Cities*, p. 18.

the local genius which had remained repressed in the earlier period of Bengal history. It was a spontaneous movement arising out of the aspirations of the people to give expression to their ideas in accordance with their own natural tendencies. The factors which contributed to its origin were popular interests in epic and *paurāṇik* stories, the growth of local cults, the recognition given by the rulers to Bengali language and also Brahminical revival and the birth of Chaitanyism, if Sanskrit literature is taken into consideration. Alien languages like Arabic or Persian could hardly accommodate the spirit of this movement so that local languages, particularly Bengali, became naturally the medium of expression. The early Sanskrit biographies of Chaitanya appear to have facilitated the process of transition from Sanskrit to vernacular culture, for they formed the basis of the Bengali biographies of the Vaiṣṇava leader which appeared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A significant element in the total volume of poetry was the growth of romanticism marking the starting point of humanism in the field of a literature that could be otherwise called predominantly religious in content. The flush of this literary-cultural enthusiasm had its effects perhaps on the subsequent phase of the literary history of Bengal. Ālāul and Daulat Qādī seem to have inherited the tradition of this romantic poetry along with its Sanskritic elements and sophisticated expression.

Sanskrit culture with its Brahminical contents, though lacking in the court patronage, continued to flourish in south-west Bengal. Raghunātha Shīromani, Raghunandana and Chaitanya are the three great men who have left permanent marks on the pages of the history of this country. The foundation of the school of *Navya Nyāya* at Navadvīpa had the effect of overshadowing its Maithili counterpart. The logicians who lived after Raghunātha were but gleaners in the chosen field of that great logician. Raghunandana's socio-religious code is similarly a permanent asset to the conservative Hindu society. Chaitanya

not only gave a lease of life to the cult of *bhakti*, but also formed the nucleus of a great literary movement that remarkably enriched the cultural life of Bengal.

Bengal in the period in question did not witness the emergence of any new forms of art. The surviving specimens of fine arts and architecture are characterized by a considerable amount of embellishment which, apart from indicating an advanced stage of civilization attained by the country, seems to reflect the prosperity of the period. Generally speaking, the tradition of arts under the Husain Shāhis was but a continuation of that established in the preceding periods. No significant experiment was made in any branch of art. The attempt at executing terracotta art on stone, though an experiment hitherto unknown, does not appear to have been successful so far as its artistic depth and representation are concerned. It is true that the highly ornamental style of writing represented by the Bow and Arrow type of *Tughra* is a notable element in the history of arts. But the later Ilyās Shāhi period found its beginning, although it arrived at its culmination and perfection under the Husain Shāhi rulers. There was a renaissance in the field of literature. But no such revivalism can be noticed in the history of pure arts and architecture of the period.

From whatever indications are available in the literary records, it is difficult to resist the inference that the rulers had tried to identify themselves with local aspirations after having put off their external cloak of foreign origin and that the development of Muslim mind was, more or less, along the line of indigenous culture. Legendary ideas and Tantric practices became, in all probability, a common heritage to some sections of the Muslims and the Hindus alike.

It was this period which witnessed the beginning of significant forces deeply affecting the political and economic history of Bengal. Between the dates of the first advent of the Europeans and the starting of the Mughal rule, one may specifically

fix the period of the historical processes which were destined to shape the life of the country for centuries to come. It is true that Mughal rule touched only the outer fringe of Bengal politics and that European trade and commerce were yet to have a proper beginning. But the period in question showed the signs of a new Bengal to be brought into existence through the working of those forces.

Husain Shāhi rule represents thus a formative period of Bengal history.

## Appendix A

### Chronology

The Chronology of the Ḥusain Shāhī sultāns is as follows :<sup>1</sup>

Ḥusain Shāh	=	899-925 A.H.	=	1494-1519 A.D.
Nuṣrat Shāh	=	925-938 A.H.	=	1519-1532 A.D.
Firūz Shāh	=	938-939 A.H.	=	1532-1533 A.D.
Mahmūd Shāh	=	939-944 A.H.	=	1533-1538 A.D.

1. The catalogues of coins used in preparing this table have already been referred to in connection with the reigns of Ḥusain, Nuṣrat and Firūz. *Supra*, pp. 37, 63, 81-82 etc. with relevant footnotes may be consulted for these references. For the coins of Mahmūd, bearing the date 944 A.H., see S. Ahmed : *Supplement*, p. 71 and A.W. Botham : *op. cit.* pp. 174-75. It has very often been maintained that Ḥusain occupied the throne of Gaud in 1493 A.D. corresponding to 899 A.H. *History of Bengal*, II, pp. 142 and 143 ; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* p. 190. But the view may be slightly modified. Ḥusain's predecessor Muẓaffar Shāh seems to have ascended the throne in the early part of 1491 A.D., for the latest inscription of Muẓaffar's predecessor Nāṣir-ud-dīn Mahmūd, is dated 2nd Muḥarram, 896 A.H./15th November, 1490 A.D. and a gold coin of Muẓaffar, obviously issued as a souvenir signalizing his accession, is clearly dated 896 A.H. Again the latest recorded date of Muẓaffar as evidenced by the Hadrat Pāṇḍua inscription, (*J.A.S.B.* 1873, pp. 290-91 ; Abid Ali : *op. cit.* pp. 114-15, Cunningham : *op. cit.* p. 84 ; Ravenshaw : *op. cit.* p. 77) is 17th Ramaḍān, 898/2nd July, 1493 and not 10th Rabi'-ul-Awwal, 898/31st December, 1492, as maintained in *History of Bengal*, vol. II, p. 141, on the basis of the Malda inscription bearing the latter date ; see *E.I.M.* 1929-30, p. 13, pl. VIII (a) ; *P.A.S.B.* 1890, p. 242 and A. H. Dani : *Bibliography*, p. 43. Thus coins and inscriptions allow to Muẓaffar, a period of nearly 2½ years. But Niẓām-ud-dīn : *op. cit.*, III, p. 270 and Salīm : *op. cit.* p. 129, hold that the sultān ruled for three years and five months. So he must have been alive not only in the later

Certain obscure points of Ḥusain Shāhi coins may be discussed in this connection. As already stated, Nuṣrat issued coins in his own name in 922/1516 and 923/1517 from Khalīfatābād and Ḥusainābād mints.<sup>1</sup> Both of these dates clearly show that he was exercising the right of issuing coins when his father 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh was alive. Maḥmūd also issued coins in 933/1527, 934/1528, 935/1529 and 938/1532 from Nuṣratābād, Muḥammadābād, Faṭhābād and Ḥusainābād.<sup>2</sup> Nuṣrat reigned from 923/1519 to 938/1532. So it is fairly certain that Maḥmūd issued these coins during the lifetime of his predecessor, Nuṣrat Shāh.

Blochmann who was the first scholar to notice the irregular issue of coins by Nuṣrat, remarks, "They either indicate an extraordinary delegation of power or point to a successful rebellion."<sup>3</sup> On the basis of the irregular coins of Maḥmūd, a modern scholar has contended that "he set up an independent government even in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh in a particular

part of 1493, but also in the early months of 1494 A.D. The earliest recorded date of Ḥusain is 10th Dhī'l Qa'dah, 899 A.H./13th August, 1494. See the Maldah inscription of Ḥusain, Ravenshaw; *op. cit.* p. 78, pl. 50, no. 10; *J.A.S.B.* 1874, p. 302 and Abid Ali: *op. cit.* pp. 152-53. Some of his coins are also dated 899 A.H. Thus 1494 A.D. is probably the first regnal year of Ḥusain Shāh. The Arabic year 898 comes to an end towards the end of September, 1493, and the last quarter of 1493 falls within 899 A.H. But there is nothing to show that Ḥusain occupied the throne towards the end of 1493. On the other hand, epigraphic and literary evidences cited above, tend to suggest that his reign commenced from 1494 A.D.

1. *Supra.* p. 68.
2. H.N. Wright: *Catalogue*, II, p. 179; Lane-Poole: *op. cit.* pp. 54-55, pl. VII, nos. 147 and 149. S. Ahmed: *Supplement*, pp. 70-71. The Sadullahpur inscription shows that he was using royal insignia in 933/1527; *J.A.S.B.* 1895, pp. 214-15.
3. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 297; see also p. 227 of the same journal where Blochmann has said that Nuṣrat struck coins in opposition to his father.



part of the kingdom of Gauḍ" and that "the rebel Maḥmūd continued his rule simultaneously with Firūz in the territories that he had formerly acquired."<sup>1</sup> These scholars are in favour of propounding a theory of simultaneous governments as illustrated in the following table :

The names of the rulers.	The period of simultaneous rule.
Ḥusain Shāh Nuṣrat Shāh	922/1516 to 923/1517.
Nuṣrat Shāh Maḥmūd Shāh	923/1527 to 935/1529 and in 938/1532.
Maḥmūd Shāh Firūz Shāh	938/1532 to 939/1533.

This means that there was a rebellion in the reign of each of the sultāns of the period in question. This is an absurd proposition for which we find no support in the sources at our disposal. 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh was too powerful a ruler to allow any rebel to flourish within his kingdom. The four mint towns from which Maḥmūd issued coins in the lifetime of Nuṣrat, must have covered an extensive territory. It would have been impossible for him to rule over so vast a region without being opposed by his more powerful brother, Nuṣrat. But history does not preserve records of any civil war between the two brothers. If there had been repeated rebellions in this period, the progress which we notice in the military, economic and cultural life of Bengal, would have been impossible. The coinage of a particular ruler is, not doubt, the indication of the exercise of sovereign rights by him. But a peculiar custom seems to have prevailed in

1. *V.R.S. Monograph*, no. 6, p. 18.

pre-Mughal Bengal. Some of the sultāns appear to have allowed the crown-princes to issue coins in their own names presumably to demonstrate to the people that the princes exercising that prerogative were going to inherit the kingdom. It was almost certain that Nuṣrat who was the eldest<sup>1</sup> and probably the ablest of the eighteen children of 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh, would succeed his father. The issuing of coins by Nuṣrat during the life-time of his father, may be regarded as actually signalizing his nomination by his father for succession. Maḥmūd who was the second son of 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh, seems to have been nominated by Nūṣrat for succession and the privilege of issuing coins, which he enjoyed, appears to be an actual confirmation of that nomination. Why Nuṣrat nominated Maḥmūd in preference to Fīrūz, is not clearly known. Probably he considered Fīrūz too young to conduct the governmental affairs.

1. Salīm : *op. cit* p. 136.

## Appendix B

### The early life of Husain

The history of the early life of Husain has given rise to an endless controversy among the scholars of our time. Kṛṣṇadāś Kavirāj tells us that Saiyid Husain Khān who was serving under a revenue officer of Gauḍ, named Suvuddhi Rāya, was once severely whipped for a fault of his own, by the latter, during the excavation of a tank. When he became the ruler of Gauḍ, he did not fail to show favour to his former master. But the sultān's wife, finding the clear marks of whipping on his body, requested him to put the Rāya to death. Although the sultān did not comply with this bad advice, he finally desecrated the caste of Subudhi Rāya who, however, left for Benares.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to ascertain if the story contains any historical truth at all. While the poet on his own admission followed previous writers, Murāri Gupta, Dāmodara Svarūpa and Bṛndāvanadāś, in matters of other details of the subject of his work, he is silent about the source of this story. Whatever might have been the source, the details of the early life of Husain tally in essential points with other known versions of it.

Joao de Barros maintains that there landed at Chittagong, an Arab merchant of noble birth, of Aden, accompanied by a number of soldiers with whose help the sultān of Gauḍ conquered Orissa and that the merchant ultimately became the ruler of Gauḍ, having killed the sultān.<sup>2</sup> Depending on

1. Kṛṣṇadāś Kavirāj : *op. cit.* madhya, xxv, pp. 255-56.
2. Faria y Souza, a late writer, who seems to have drawn mainly upon de Barros, says, "About fifty years before the Portuguese discovered India, came to Gauḍ an Arabian Mahométan, who growing rich and powerful, obtained the then King of Bengala, a victory over the King of Orixá. The King besides other

this statement, Blochmann has inferred that the Arab merchant mentioned by de Barros, is Saiyid Ḥusain Sharif Makki.<sup>1</sup> According to Buchanan-Hamilton, Ḥusain was a native of Rangpur district. The Pāṇḍuā manuscript used by Buchanan-Hamilton, contains the following information : ".....The Sultan Ibrahim, grandfather of Hoseyn, was deprived of his life and throne by a converted Hindu, who assumed the name of Jalal-uddin ; and Hoseyn did not recover the government until a rapid succession of murders and insurrections, had weakened the authority of the Hindu and of his successors. During a long period of 76 Muhammedan years, the son of Ibrahim, and his family seemed to have found refuge in the dominions of the Komoteswori, whose government afterwards Hoseyn overthrew."<sup>2</sup> Presuming that there was a gap of 76 years between Ḥusain and his so-called grandfather Ibrāhīm, we may place the latter in the beginning of the fifteenth century. But no ruler of that name is known to have ruled in Bengal.<sup>3</sup> But who was this sultān

Rewards made him Captain of his Guard, and he ingratelully killed the King, usurped the Kingdom, and left the inheritance thereof to Moors that succeeded"; *op. cit.* vol. i, p. 417. From a careful analysis of whatever has been said by Faria y Souza about the political condition and geographical position of the early sixteenth century Bengal (*op. cit.* pp. 96-97, 108, 220, 273, 314-15 and 415-22), it appears that he has relied upon de Barros and perhaps other Portuguese writers.

1. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 287.
2. Martin : *op. cit.* vol. iii, p. 448 ; cf. also vol. ii, pp. 618-19.
3. The last ruler of the first Ilyās Shāhī dynasty was 'Alā'-ud-dīn Fīrūz whose coins are dated 817 A.H./1414 A.D. ; see Bhattasali : *Coins and Chronology*, pp. 107-08, pl. vii, nos. 1-a and 1-b ; S. Ahmed : *Supplement*, pp. 58-59, pl. iii, no. 133. He was succeeded by Jalal-ud-dīn Muḥammad Shāh, the converted son of Rājā Gaṇesha. The house of Rājā Gaṇesha seems to have controlled the destiny of Bengal till 1432 A.D., after which date Nāṣir-ud-dīn Maḥmūd restored the Ilyās Shāhī dynasty. A careful study of the history of Bengal shows that none of the sultāns belonging to the House of Rājā Gaṇesha and the Ilyās Shāhī dynasty was named Ibrāhīm.

Ibrāhīm ? Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqī of Jaunpūr who was the contemporary of Jalāl-ud-dīn Muḥammad, had no connection with 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh of Gaud. The grandson of Ibrāhīm was 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh who ruled in Jaunpūr. It appears that this Ḥusain has been confused by the Pāṇḍuā manuscript with his *Gaudīya* namesake. The story of the early life of 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain Shāh, supplied by this source, is thus without any historical foundation.

The above views on the early life of Ḥusain Shāh have little connection with Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj's statement that he had served a Hindu official before he became the ruler of Gaud. According to a popular tradition found in the district of Murshidabad, Ḥusain served in his boyhood as a cow-keeper in the house of a Brahmin of Chāndpāḍā, a village in Murshidabad, to whom he showed, on becoming the king of Gaud, much gratitude by offering him the village of Chāndpāḍā on a nominal rent of one anna, so that the Brahmin's *zamīndārī* became known as Ekāni Chāndpāḍā. It is said that the wife of Ḥusain Shāh, bent on desecrating his caste, compelled the Brahmin to take beef so that he had to become a convert to Vaiṣṇavism.<sup>1</sup> The story is almost the same as that mentioned by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj. It may be conjectured here that the poet, while writing the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* towards the end of the sixteenth century, probably found this tradition in wide circulation in Rāḍh whence he might have drawn the material for this story. But no historian can safely rely on a traditional story like this unless it is corroborated by other known facts. Of course, the tradition current in Rāḍh towards the end of the sixteenth century had possibly some connection with the events which took place in that part of the country at the end of the fifteenth century A.D. Salīm says<sup>2</sup> that Ḥusain, son of one Āshraf Ḥusainī, who was a *Sharīf* of Makka, and an inhabitant of Tirmidh (a town in Turkestan)

1. R.D. Banerjee : *Vāṅgālār Itihāsa*, II, p. 243.

2. *Op. cit.* pp. 131-32.

came accidentally to Bengal, stayed in the house of a *qāḍī* of Chāndpāḍā, a village in Rāḍh, who gave him education and also the hand of his daughter, because of his noble pedigree, and eventually became the vizier of Muẓaffar *Shah*. It seems that Salīm has depended for his information partially on the account given by Firishṭah who also calls Ḥusain, an inhabitant of Mecca.<sup>1</sup> Blochmann is in favour of identifying Chāndpāḍā with a village of the same name in Jessore district.<sup>2</sup> But this identification of the *locale* of Ḥusain does not seem to be satisfactory. When Salīm has clearly stated that the Chāndpāḍā in question was situated in Rāḍh or West Bengal, we have got hardly any reason to locate it in Jessore which was not then included in Rāḍh. Moreover, this Chāndpāḍā does not abound in traditional stories about the early life of Ḥusain *Shah* which we find in Chāndpāḍā of Murshidabad district.<sup>3</sup> Not a single inscription of Ḥusain *Shah* has so far been discovered in the village of Chāndpāḍā in Jessore district. It seems that Chāndpāḍā, also known as Ekāni Chāndpāḍā (probably because of the reason already mentioned) which is at present a village in Murshidabad district, is the place referred to by Salīm. Although the above statement of Salīm does not corroborate the story told by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, it indicates the association of Ḥusain *Shah*'s early life with that part of Murshidabad—a fact clearly proved by the discovery of a number of inscriptions of the early reign of Ḥusain *Shah* in the villages around Chāndpāḍā.<sup>4</sup> If the association of the sultān's early life with Murshidabad seems so much well-established, the fact of his serving under a Hindu revenue official there before he became the ruler of Gauḍ, is also highly probable. Both Firishṭah and Salīm call him a Saiyid<sup>5</sup> and thus indicate that Ḥusain was an Arab by birth. His Arab

1. Firishṭah : *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 301.

2. *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 228.

3. For these stories, see *J.A.S.B.* 1917, pp. 143-47.

4. *Ibid.* pp. 148-50.

5. Firishṭah : *op. cit.* II, p. 301.

lineage is numismatically and epigraphically established. The expression "Sultān Husain Shāh, son of Saiyid Ashraf-ul-Husaini" frequently appears on his coins.<sup>1</sup> Thus there may be some truth in Salim's statement that Husain was the son of Saiyid Ashraf-ul-Husaini who was originally an inhabitant of Mecca and who ultimately settled in Tirmidh. Husain's father was the *sharīf* of Mecca. The *sharīfs* enjoyed much respect in the society. The *naqīb-ul-ashraf* or Keeper of the register of the descendants of the Prophet, who might have been the sole administrator of the city over which he was placed, was sometimes appointed from amongst the members of the Husaini house. Ibn Battūṭah tells the story of a *sharīf* who came to India in the reign of sultān Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Tughluq and died after having enjoyed a suitable revenue assignment.<sup>2</sup> Later sources, however, indicate that the *sharīf* was the care-taker of the Ka'ba the recent example being *sharīf* Husain of Mecca. As members of the Husaini family, the *sharīfs* had Shi'ite inclinations.

1. H.N. Wright : *Catalogue*, vol. II, part II, pl. v, nos. 167, 168 and 175 ; Lane-Poole : *op. cit.* pls. v and vi, nos. 108, 122 and 128 ; *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 292.
2. *Travels of Ibn Battūṭa*, Gibb, I, p. 258 ff.

## Appendix C

### Ismā'il Ghazi

It is necessary here to say a few words about Ismā'il Ghāzī whom the scholars want to associate with the reign of Ḥusain Shāh. Facts and fiction have so inextricably mixed around the name of Ismā'il Ghāzī that almost all writers appear to have accepted the current story about him without any question. Our present knowledge about Ismā'il Ghāzī has been aptly summarized by Blochmann in the following words :<sup>1</sup> "If we strip the legend of the headless rider of the wonderful, we have the plain story that Ismā'il, *Ganj-i-Lashkar*, a general of Ḥusain Shāh, invaded Orissa from Bengal in the beginning of the 16th century, gained a signal victory over the Orissans at Katak, and then returned to Madāran, where he built a fort within the walls of which he lies buried. Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the historical value of legends in general, it strikes me that the Madāran legend confirms and completes in a most unexpected manner, the Uria accounts from which Stirling has extracted the above mentioned details of the Muhammadan invasion of Orissa." Detailing the story, Rajani Kanta Chakrabarti<sup>2</sup> says that Ismā'il Ghāzī who attacked Orissa in 1510 A.D., was put to death by Ḥusain Shāh, for he suspected that Ismā'il was trying to revolt against the sulṭān after having constructed a fort at Mandāran frontier. The headless body of Ismā'il, riding on a horse, proceeded from Gauḍ, in the direction of Mandāran, while the severed head followed it hovering high up in the air. Arriving at the gate of Mandāran fort, Ismā'il wanted

1. *P.A.S.B.* 1870, p. 120.

2. *Op. cit.* u, pp. 120-21 ; The history of this "headless rider", of Mandāran has also been told by Blochmann, *P.A.S.B.* 1870, pp. 217-20.



some betel-leaf from the guards who were waiting there. When they refused to comply with the request of the dead, the trunkless head went back to Gauḍ and the body was buried at Mandāran. Rakhal Das Banerji also repeats the same story when he says that Ismā'il Ghāzī, a general of the *Nawab* of Bengal (Husain Shāh), destroyed the city of Puri.<sup>1</sup> Buchanan Hamilton who associates Ismā'il with Husain's Kamrūpa expeditions, maintains that the saint was alive in the reign of Nuṣrat Shāh.<sup>2</sup>

It thus appears that the whole basis of Ismā'il Ghāzī being regarded as a contemporary and officer of Husain Shāh, is the story said to have been found in the *Mādla Pañjī*, referred to by Rakhal Das Banerji and Stirling, the latter being the source of Blochmann's observation. These historians have been influenced by the legend of Ismā'il Ghāzī which is still in wide circulation in south-west Bengal. The legendary story mentioned by Rajani Kanta Chakrabarti and Blochmann, is a strange admixture of historical facts and popular imagination.

Initially, however, the reference to the *Mādla Pañjī* appears to be incorrect for the simple reason that the *Pañjī* speaks of an attack on Orissa in 1509 A.D. by the *surasthāna*.<sup>3</sup> The term *surasthāna* seems to be a corruption of the Arabic term *suṭṭān*. The *Pañjī* never names Ismā'il Ghāzī. The term *surasthāna* in the *Pañjī* suggests that the attack on Orissa was led by the *suṭṭān* himself assisted by his officers. That the *suṭṭān* personally took part in some of the campaigns against Orissa is evidenced by the Sylhet inscription<sup>4</sup> of Husain Shāh dated 1512 A.D. and also by Bengali and Orissan sources.<sup>5</sup> The term *surasthāna* which can thus be easily explained should not

1. *Vaṅgālār Itihāsa*, II, pp. 245-46.

2. Martin: *op. cit.* III, pp. 411 and 412; see also K. L. Barua: *The Early History of Kāmṛūpa*, pp. 240-41.

3. *J.A.S.B.* 1900, no. 2, p. 186.

4. *J.A.S.B.* 1922, p. 413.

5. *Supra*, p. 50

be understood to have stood for Ismā'il Ghāzī.

The association of Ismā'il with Ḥusain Shāh's attacks does not, therefore, bear scrutiny. It is true that one Ismā'il Ghāzī, had once attacked Orissa from Bengal. It is also true that Ismā'il was executed at the order of his sultān. That Ḥusain Shāh attacked Orissa is as much beyond doubt as that Ismā'il was buried in Mandāran the building of the fortification of which place is associated with his name. Ismā'il Ghāzī who actually attacked Orissa did so under a previous regime, i.e. in the reign of sultān Bārbak Shāh. He died under the order of this sultān in 878 A.H./1474 A.D.<sup>1</sup> Bārbak Shāh's attack on Orissa confused with the similar incident of Ḥusain Shāh's reign together with the unfortunate fact of Ismā'il being beheaded by the sultān's order mixed up in popular legends that grew up in the name of Ismā'il who is almost worshipped as a great saint by both Hindus and Muslims of south-west Bengal.<sup>2</sup> In clearing the jumble the *Risālat-ush-Shuhadā* comes to our rescue. It was written in 1042 A.H./1633 A.D.<sup>3</sup> What the *Risāla* says regarding the historical personality of Ismā'il may be summarized in the following lines:<sup>4</sup> Bhandasī Rāya, the commandant of Ghorāghāt, requested Ismā'il to allow him to build up a fort in the frontier region. Ismā'il complied with the request. But the Rāya poisoned the mind of the sultān against Ismā'il telling him that Ismā'il had entered into a friendly alliance with the king of Kāmrupa. Determined to bring about the ruin

1. *Risālat-ush-shuhadā*, J.A.S.B. 1874, p. 236.
2. Paying tribute to him, Sītārāmdās, a seventeenth century poet of Bengal, says: "I adore *pir* Ismā'il at Gaḍ Mandāran. (It is due to his spiritual influence that) tigers and buffaloes live together in the forest. The embankment, which Ismā'il has constructed, exists at Gaḍ Mandāran. He built up seventy-two strongholds within the fortification of Mandāran. Bowing down on the ground, I adore his feet." Text quoted by Sukumar Sen; *Madhya Yuger Vāṅglā O Vāṅgālī*, p. 41.
3. *Risāla*: J.A.S.B. 1874, p. 222.
4. *Ibid.* pp. 235-38.

of Ismā'il, the sultān sent his soldiers against Ismā'il who repulsed them quite successfully. He wrote a letter to Ismā'il asking him to appear at the court immediately. Ismā'il yielded to the decree of his fate by responding to his call. He was executed at the order of the sultān on Friday, 14th Shā'bān, 845 A.H. (4th January, 1474 A.D.). His property was confiscated by the royal authority. When the sultān came to know the role played by the Rāya, he burst into tears. Accompanied by the queen, he went to Mandāran and Kāntāduār in order to show respect to the departed soul.<sup>1</sup>

The evidence of the *Risāla* gets partial confirmation from an inscription<sup>a</sup> dated 900 A.H./1494-95 fixed up on the tomb of Ismā'il at Mandāran in so far as putting Ismā'il in a period earlier than 1494-95. Ismā'il could not have been alive in 1509 when Husain Shāh's attacks on Orissa took place.

The evidence of the *Risālat-ush-Shuhadā* together with the Mandāran inscription possibly sets at rest the confusion that so long existed about Ismā'il, unless one is prepared to presume the existence of two Ismā'is, one killed in 1474 A.D., and another

1. The *Risālat-ush-Shuhadā* also informs us that the saint came to Bengal with a view to propagating Islām in the East. Bārbak Shāh helped him by recruiting him as one of his military officers and also by entrusting to him the task of attacking the non-Muslim rulers of Kāmrūpa and Orissa. Ismā'il Ghāzi seems to have been successful in subduing these rulers. (See the *Risāla* in *J.A.S.B.* 1874, pp. 226-35 and *History of Bengal*, vol. II, pp. 133-34). The terrible fate which was awaiting him has already been described. The *Risāla* seems to be the earliest work to narrate the incidents connected with Ismā'il's life. Although we lamentably lack in materials to verify the biographical account gleaned from the *Risāla*, it may be inferred here that the work is based on historical truth. That the political relation of Bengal with Kāmrūpa and Orissa was far from friendly, is a well-established fact.
2. *J.A.S.B.* 1917, pp. 133-34.

leading attack on Orissa in 1509 A.D. both being buried at Mandāran and equally venerated by the local Hindus and Muslims. The presumption would be too far-fetched.

Husain Shāh's attack on Orissa had nothing to do with Ismā'il Ghāzī who flourished in the earlier period i.e. the reign of Bārbak Shāh.<sup>1</sup>

1. See my Bengali paper : *Ismā'il Ghāzī O Samasāmayik Vāṅglā*, (Ismā'il Ghāzī and contemporary Bengal), *Bengali Academy Patrikā*, 1364 B.S., 3rd issue, pp. 45-54.

## Appendix D

### Texts from the Haud-ul-Hayat

The texts together with a translation of the Persian passages contained in pls. I and II attached to this work, are given below. They describe the *garbhāsana* ( or the posture resembling that of a child in the mother's womb ) and the *sabhāsana* ( or the posture looking like the one taken in a meeting ), illustrated in pls. I and II respectively.

#### Plate—1

چون طالبی خواهد که باین شغل مشغولی نماید باید که  
جلسه گریه آسن پیش گیرد، گریه آسن آنرا گویند که چنانچه بچه  
در شکم مادر می باشد، در باید های چپ بر پائی راست  
نهاده دو سرین بر دو پائی داشته و سر میان دو زانو برداشته  
و دو آرنج بر دو گاهیگاه نهاده و دو دست بر دو گوش کرده  
ناف را به پشت رساند از ناف رمقی که پیداست آنرا نرنجن  
میگویند عبارت از . . . است دم را حبس کند -

When anybody likes to engage himself with this particular exercise, he should adopt the *garbhāsana*. This is called *garbhāsana*, as it is like the form of a baby in the womb of the mother. He should put the left foot on the right foot keeping the two buttocks on the two feet and the head in between the two knees kept upward, while keeping the two elbows in the abdomen and the two palms on the two ears. The navel should be pressed towards the back. The position appearing from the navel is called *nirāñjana* meaning...stopping the breath, as much as possible.

## Plate—II

خواهد که ذکر کنیبهک کند بادی که بر اعضا شده است  
 از پورک تدریجاً بام الدماغ برو قوت نکند و اگرچه اعضا  
 شکسته شولد، چون بام الدماغ رسد چشم را واز دارد زبانرا  
 بسکام جفشالد نفس از راه بینی آهسته آهسته بدر آمدن دهد  
 باز عمل پورک از سر آغاز کند چون درون کشند پورک  
 گویند چون بیرون بر آرد کنیبهک نامند چون بگذارد ریچک  
 خوانند ذکر سبهاشن برای قوت بینی و رگهائی گردن و پشت و  
 هضم طعام و خشک شدن لسان که بندهائی تن است این  
 جلسه نگاهدارد که پائے راست باساق بران چپ نهد و پائی  
 چپ باساق بران راست نهد لرمی و آهستگی تا آنکه عادت  
 پذیر گردد، در آغاز مشکل است

Whoever likes to perform (the *dhikr* of) *kumbhak*, should take care of what his organs have borne (hardship) gradually upto the origin of brain due to *pūrak*, lest his organs should suffer from breakage. When he reaches the centre of the brain, he should moisten the eyes and the tongue with wine and should let the breath come out from the nostrils slowly. Then he should begin with the exercise of *pūrak*. When he inhales, it is called *pūrak*; when he exhales, it is called *kumbhak* and when he discharges (air), it is called *rechak*. Description of *sabhāsana* is meant for strengthening the nose, the veins of the neck and the back, and digestion of food and drying of the internal organs which are the servants of the body. The right foot with the leg be placed on the left thigh and the left foot with the leg on the right thigh, gently and slowly till he gets accustomed. To begin with, it is difficult.

## Appendix E

### Texts from the Ādya-Parichaya and the Jnana-sagara

#### I

Texts from the *Ādya-Parichaya* of Shaiikh Zāhid translated or paraphrased in ch. VI, sec. II. Pages mentioned at several places are those of the present work containing translation or paraphrase of the texts concerned :

<i>nā chhila khitijala</i>	<i>i mahīmaṇḍala</i>
<i>shūnya madhye nā chhila prakāsha,</i>	
<i>svarga marta pātūla</i>	<i>sava chhila andhakāra</i>
<i>āur nā chhila ākāsha.</i>	
<i>chandra sujjo tārā</i>	<i>nā chhila abhiparā</i>
<i>nā chhila navina jaladhara,</i>	
<i>vāu varuṇa ānala</i>	<i>pṛthivī rasātala</i>
<i>nā chhila parvata shikhara.</i>	
<i>nadanadī shūnyākāra</i>	<i>nā chhila jhoḍajhaṅkāra</i>
<i>nā chhila sāgara tīttasthāna,</i>	
<i>saṁsāre nā chhila kichhu</i>	<i>sava haila tāra picchhu</i>
<i>save mātra chhila bhagavāna.</i>	
<i>ekā chhila nijarūpa</i>	<i>kichhu nā pāila sukha</i>
<i>bhāvilā prabhu āpana sharīre,</i>	
<i>shūnyākāra ghuchāi dṛṣṭa</i>	<i>rachilāta nānā srsta</i>
<i>eka khelā khelāva saṁsāre.</i>	
<i>ūpanūra diyā rati</i>	<i>nīje laye eka mūrtti</i>
<i>rākhilā gosāñi alaṅghya sāgare,</i>	
<i>mitta saṅge ālāpane</i>	<i>kautuka vāḍila mane</i>
<i>nīrmāila ekahi huṅkāre.</i>	
<i>srjana kariyā mittā</i>	<i>harisa vāḍila chitta</i>
<i>jalera utpatti haila saṁsāre,</i>	
<i>shīghra kahite vachana</i>	<i>tāhāte janmila pavana</i>
<i>ānala janmila krodha haite.</i>	
<i>mittera aṅgera mali</i>	<i>nija kare tāhā tuli</i>
<i>yogāila jalera upare</i>	

mittikā vāḍaye jale                      samudrera utthāle  
 -                      dine dine haya prasare.  
 jammila chāriratna                      pāiyā mahāyatna  
                     sradhāe sṛjila gosāñi,  
 saṁsārete jamme                      sava haya kreme kreme  
                     ohā vahi anya kichhu nāñi.  
 yata chhila bhayaṅkara                      sava haila prachāra  
                     onkāre karila nirmāna,  
 rachila tina jīva                      tāhāte diyā shiva  
                     sainya mukhya kaila sthāne sthāne.  
 jammila deva asura                      vale haila prachura  
                     vāhuvale nā chine anyathā,  
 niravadhi kare raṇa                      nājāne maraṇa  
                     kāho sane nāhika mamatā.  
 ghoḍā hasti prakhara                      rāksasa bhayaṅkara  
                     rājatva kare chirakāla,  
 bhuñjila āpana mane                      vividha vidhāne nā chine  
                     kevā sṛjila sayāla.  
 prabhu karila mane                      āmā keho nāhi chine  
                     ki ki kāraṇe karilun prakāsha,  
 krodha haiyā deo                      sava karivā khao  
                     ye ke ke kaila vaṁshanāsha,  
 nirmūla kariyā deo                      saṁsāreta nāñi keo  
                     emana gela katho divasa,  
 punarvāra karila mane                      manusya sṛjon bhuvane  
                     tāhā haite pāimu harisa.  
                     Supra. pp. 199-200.

tāhaka karimu rājā                      jīvere karimu prajā  
                     pṛthivī sājiyā diva mahitāle,  
 karimu pravīna                      puje jena rātridina  
                     teyāgiyā sakala jañjāle.  
 āra katha sṛjila                      kāhāta sukha nā pāila  
                     manuṣya karimu sṛjana,  
 āpanāra aṅga chhila                      āra katha nirmūla  
                     kemane haya manusya ākūra.  
                     Supra, p. 202.

...                      ...                      ...

vāta varuṇa ānala vaise jei jei khāne,  
 svarga marita pātāla kahimu sthāne sthāne.



*chandra, sujja ākāshe jata tārā sāje,  
tulanā dīmu sava sharīrera mājhe.  
nadanadī āra gaṅgā bhāgīrathī,  
sharīrera mājhe d̐heu vahichhe divārāti*

...	...	...
<i>satya tritiya dvāpara</i>		<i>kali mahāprakhara</i>
...	...	...
<i>ei svarira mājhe</i>		<i>chārī veda āchhe</i>
...	...	...
<i>ei svarira mājhe</i>		<i>chārī kitāva virāje</i>
...	...	...
<i>eita svarira bhītara</i>		<i>yāchhe parvata shikhara</i>
<i>tāhe yāchhe jhora jhañkāra</i>		
<i>Supra. p. 203.</i>		

...	...	...
<i>br̐ksera sikaḍa laḍe kahila brahma</i>		
<i>munuṣyera sikaḍa viparita karma</i>		
<i>Supra. p. 203.</i>		

## II

What follows is texts from the *Jñāna-pradīpa* of Saiyid Sulṭān translated or paraphrased in ch. vi, sec. ii, of this work. We have mentioned below the texts, folio nos, of the Dacca University MS. and the pages of this book which contain either translation or paraphrase of the texts concerned ; texts from D.U. MSS. have been slightly edited with the help of quotations in Sāhitya Vishārād's *Catalogue* and Enamul Huq's *Muslim Vāṅgalā Sāhitya*. In spelling or correcting the names of nerves, yoga literature has been used.

*brahmāṇḍe ye guṇa vaise se guṇa sharīre.*  
fol. 9b ; *supra. p. 204.*

...	...	...
<i>merudaṇḍe t̐ṅgilā piṅgilā dui nāḍī,</i>		
<i>yena br̐kṣa dui pāshe latā āchhe veḍī.</i>		
<i>dakṣiṇe piṅgilā nāḍī yena divākara,</i>		
<i>vāma pāshe t̐ṅgilā nāḍī yena shashadhara.</i>		
<i>t̐ṅgilāta vaise gaṅgā piṅgilā javunā,</i>		
<i>surāsura madhye vaise nāmeta suṣumnā.</i>		
<i>tin nāḍī eka hal āchhe bhuruvāṭ,</i>		
<i>jñāni save vale ei tripinira ghāṭ.</i>		
<i>fol. 10a ; supra. p. 205.</i>		

*iṅgilā piṅgilā nāḍī dui ye pradhāna,  
gāndhārī kuhū hastijihvā pūṣā yashasvinī,  
payasvinī alamvūsā triguṇa shaṅkhinī.*

fol. 9b-10a ; *supra.* p. 205.

*madhyeta susumnā nāḍī sarvva madhye sar,  
ādyāshakti sādhipār sei ye duār.*

... ..

*pūrake pūriyā vāyu karive bhakṣana,  
sūchī mukhe sutā yena kare praveshana.*

... ..

*sandhi pāi sei vāyu karive pravesha,  
uthite uthite dhvani karive vishesa.  
shunite shunite dhvani sthira have mana,*

... ..

*sei dhvani madhye jyoti chiniyā laiva.  
tave ei jyoti madhye mana nityojiva.  
tave sei jyotite manera have laya,  
sei se prabhura pantha jānio nishchaya.*

fol. 10a ; *supra.* pp. 205-06.

*jñāni save vale ei tripinīra ghāt.  
ei ghāṭe yei jana sināna ye kare,  
koṭi koṭi janmera pāpe tāre ki karite pāre.*

fol. 10a ; *supra.* p. 208.

*tummi sṛṣṭi tummi karṭta tummi ye svarūpa,  
fol. 6b , *supra.* p. 211.*

*triguṇa nāḍīra kathā tina thāṇī veṅkū,  
tāhāke jānile nare mṛtyu nāhi shaṅkā.*

fol. 3a ; *supra.* p. 213.

*dekhite nā pāri yāre tāre vali shūnya,  
yuhāre chintile dekhi purusera dhanya.*

fol. 4b ; *supra.* p. 218.

## Appendix F

### A. Bibliographical Notes

In reviewing the history of the period in question, materials from a number of sources have been used. As it is difficult to give an exhaustive survey of all of them, the present writer has selected only the important ones for the present purpose.

A critical use of some of the evidences supplied by Persian sources can help us in reconstructing the political history of the period under review. Persian chronicles like the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, the *Tārīkh-i-Firishṭah*, the *Riyāq-us-Salāṭīn* and the English version of Buchanan-Hamilton's Pāṇḍuā manuscript, give but an incomplete idea about some of the sultāns of the Ḥusain Shāhī dynasty without touching at all on the socio-cultural aspects of life in the country. Though Nizām-ud-dīn and Firishṭah briefly narrate the events of the reigns of Ḥusain and Nuṣrat, they remain silent on the reign of Firūz and refer to Maḥmūd, particularly in connection with Sher Shāh's attacks on Bengal, thus giving the impression to the reader that they did not know that Maḥmūd belonged to the Ḥusain Shāhī dynasty. Ghulām Ḥusain Salīm's *Riyāq-us-Salāṭīn* is inadequate in as much as the author vaguely refers to Ḥusain's conquest of Orissa and Kamrūpa and does not at all mention his Tippera expeditions and occupation of Chittagong. Dates and sequence of events as given by these writers, are not only confusing, but also misleading. These Persian sources, if corroborated and supplemented by numismatic, epigraphic and local literary sources, can, of course, give a bare skeleton of political history of the period in question. The '*Ālamgīr Nāmā* and the *Faṭḥiyah-i-'ibriyah* contain an account of Ḥusain Shāh's expedition against Assam which seems to have been closely copied by the writer of the *Riyāq-us-Salāṭīn*. Todar Mall's Rent Roll as found in the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, helps the students of history in understanding the nature of

the territorial divisions and administrative units that obtained in Bengal, particularly towards the end of the sixteenth century. Badāyūnī's *Muntakhab-ut-Tawārīkh* is useful in so far as it gives information about Husain Shāh's relation with Sikandar Lūdī and Husain Sharqī of Jaunpūr. While the *Memoirs* of Bābur throw considerable light on Bengal's relation with the Mughals, Afghān sources like the *Tārīkh-i-Salāṭīn-i-Afāghanah* of Aḥmad Yādgar and the *Tārīkh-i-Sher Shāhī* of 'Abbās Sarwānī give us a connected account of events leading to Sher Shāh's occupation of Gauḍ in 1538 A.D. Sources like the *Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī*, the *Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī*, the *Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī*, the *Humāyūn Nāmāh* and the *Tadhkirat-ul-Wāqī'āt*, though referred to wherever necessary in this work, do not have sufficient positive value for the present purpose. The *Risālat-ush-Shuhadā* is useful for correcting the date of Ismā'il Ghāzī and ascertaining his political relationship with Bārbak Shāh.

Contemporary Bengali poems constitute an indispensable source for the study of the socio-cultural history of Bengal. Works like the *Manasā-maṅgal* of Vijaya Gupta and the *Manasā-vijaya* of Vipradās not only show the growth of the Manasā cult, but also throw sufficient side-lights on various aspects of Bengali life. Bengali biographies of Chaitanya including the *Chaitanya-bhāgavat* of Bṛndāvanadās, the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, the *Chaitanya-maṅgal* of Lochanadās and the *Chaitanya-maṅgal* of Jayānanda, are mines of information, indicating as they do the gradual evolution of Chaitanyism, particularly its Navadvīpa tradition. The *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, may be used quite cautiously for writing the history of the early phase of Chaitanyism, for it is based on materials and inspiration received from the works of the Bṛndāvana Gosvāmins who had hardly any connection with the Navadvīpa tradition of Vaiṣṇavism. The *Shab-i-Mī'rāj* and the *Jñāna-pradīpa* of Saiyid Sulṭān together with such later works as the *Yoga Kālandar* and the *Jñāna-sāgara* of 'Alī Ridā, give us a clear idea about the process of transformation which Muslim culture was going through in those days. These works, with

the exception of the *Shab-i-Mi'rāj*, betray a strange inter-mingling of yogic practices with Islamic mysticism. Arabic and Persian translations or adaptations of the Sanskrit *Amṛta-kunḍa*, help us a great deal, in ascertaining the nature of this process. The poems composed by Śhrīdhara and Sābirid on the love story of Vidyā and Sundra, represent the earliest tradition of romanticism in Bengali literature which can be properly understood, if its Hindi-Avadhī background as constituted by the *Mṛgāvatī* of Quṭban and the *Padumāvatī* of Jaisi, is borne in mind. The *Parāgalī Mahābhārat* and the *Ashvamedha Parva*, apart from indicating the process of translating Sanskrit legendary works into Bengali, give some stray information about Ḥusain's conquests of Chittagong and Tippera, which may be corroborated by the later Bengali chronicle *Rājamālā*. Different versions of the Assam *Burañjī*, though full of traditions, give details about the Ḥusain Shāhi rulers' expeditions against the Ahom kingdom. The *Shunya-Purāṇa*, the *Dharma-pūjā-vidhāna*, the *Gorakṣa-vijaya* and the *Chandīmāṅgala* of Kavikaṅkan, supply certain data invaluable for the history of the Dharma, Nātha and Chaṇḍī cults and for many other aspects of life as well.

Sanskrit biographies of Chaitanya corresponding to the Bengali ones mentioned above, throw light on the Navadvīpa school of Vaiṣṇavism in its simple, original form. These include the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* of Murāri Gupta and the *Chaitanya-charitāmṛta* and the *Chaitanya-chandrodyā* of Kavikarṇapūra, a brief survey of which will be found in the seventh chapter of this work. The *Smṛtitattva* of Raghunandana which reveals the Brahminical attitude towards the Hindu life and the different dramas and *champūs*, give us a fair idea about the socio-cultural milieu that influenced the country for a considerable period of time.

The importance of the foreign travellers' accounts cannot be overestimated. Varthema and Barbosa who came to Bengal in the early sixteenth century, give valuable information about the trade, industry and people of this country. The account of

Joao de Barros is important, particularly for Bengal's political and geographical conditions relating to the period under discussion. The *Portuguese Asia* of Faria y Souza, a seventeenth-century writer, contains an account of Bengal substantially similar to the one found in the work of de Barros. The Chinese annals written in the fifteenth century and the *Rehla* of Ibn Battūtah belonging to an earlier period have also been drawn upon, for they contain certain materials useful for the history of our period.

Coins and inscriptions which throw light on the history of Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal, have been used probably not without profit. These have helped the present writer in fixing or correcting certain important dates and gleaned many other peculiarities of the socio-political life of Bengal such as the nature of sovereignty and peculiarity of the function of the provincial governors and other officials.

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## INDEX

- 'Abd-ul-Ḥaq Dehlawī, f.n. 15.  
 'Abdullah Ibn Maymūn, 168.  
 Abū Tawwamah, Sharf-ud-dīn, f.n. 14.  
 Abyssinian sultāns, 7 ; slaves, 37.  
 Abyssinians, the, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 290.  
 Adina, mosque, 22, 23, 24, 296, 302.  
 Ādishūra, 16.  
 Afghāns, the, 69, 70 ; anti-Mughal confederacy, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 85, 88.  
 Afghanistan, 1, 24, 25.  
 Aḥmad Shāh, of Bengal, 5 ; of Gujrat, 121.  
 Aḥmad Shāh ibn Malik Tabligha, 8.  
 Ahmedabad, mosques of, 22, 306, 307.  
 Ahom kings, 10 ; kingdom, f.n. 18 ; coins, 28 ; coinage, 42 ; Rajā, 44.  
 Ahoms, the, 77, 79, f.n. 103, 106.  
 Aibak, Quṭb-ud-dīn, 2.  
 Ajapājapa, 213, 216, 217.  
 Ājñā-chakra, 204, 207, 215, 216.  
 Akbar, 114, 117, 131, 289.  
 Alamvūṣā, nerve, 205.  
 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain (of Bengal), 5 ; non-aggression pact with Sikandar Lūdī, 9, 33 ; gold coins of, f.n. 26-27 ; wazīr of Shams-ud-dīn Muzaḥḥar Shāh, 34-35 ; rise to power, 36, 37 ; achievements in Bihar, 38, 39 ; war with Kāmṛūpa, 40, 41 ; his coins, 41, 42, 43 ; war with Assam, 44, 45 ; war with Tippera, 45, 46, 52-55 ; war with Orissa, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50-52 ; occupation of Chittagong, 55, 56, 57, 61, 62 ; death, 63 ; estimate of, 64 ; religious policy, 64-68 ; Hindu officers, 64, 65, 66 ; times of, 83 ; administrative structure, 90, 91 ; assumption of *khālifātullāh* title, 92-94, 347-48 ; nobility, 98, 99, f.n. 122, 123, 135 ; gold coins, 155, 156 ; Brahmins serving, 192 ; tolerance towards Vaiṣṇavism, 193, 194 ; education, 317, 318.  
 'Alā'-ud-dīn Ḥusain, Sharqī (Jaunpūr), 292, 293.  
 'Alā'-ud-dīn Jāwī, f.n. 6.  
 'Alā'-ud-dīn Khaljī, 93, 261, 312.  
 'Alā'-ud-dīn Mas'ūd, 43.  
 Ālāul, 13, 261, 349.  
 'Alā'-ul-Ḥaq, of Pāṇḍuā, f.n. 4.  
*al malik-ul mu'izzam-wā'l mukarram*, honorary title, 98.  
 al-Walīd, mosque of, 22, 23.  
 'Alī Mardān, 2, 15, 221.  
 'Alī Rijā, 16 ; philosophical ideas of, 217-220 ; mystic poet, 237.  
*amirs*, 105.  
*Amṛta-kunḍa*, 15, 221, 222, 223.

- Anāhata-chakra*, 184, 204, 206, 215, 217.  
*anāhatanād*, 184.  
*aqṭā'*, 98.  
 Arabs, the, 311, 312, 313, 344.  
 Arakan, 28, 42, 43, 55, 56, 57, 58, 84, 105, 145, 262.  
 Arghun Birdi, Mughal general, 74.  
 Armenians, the, 345.  
 'arṣah, 114, 115, 116, 121.  
*āsana*, 207.  
 Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī, 4.  
 Assam, 28, 42, 44, 45, 48, 49, 58, 63, 77, 79, 80.  
 Aṭalā mosque, of Jaunpur, 23.  
 Augustus, 348.  
 Avadhūta, sect, 180.  
 Avadhūti, Avadhūtikā, nerve, 180, 181.  
*avatāras*, 175, 278.  
 A'zam Shāh, 11.
- Bābur, 7, 9, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73 ; fighting with Nuṣrat, 74, 75, 76, 77, 98, 104, 105, 111, 312.  
 Baḍa Sonā, mosque, 303, 308.  
 Baḍa Wazīr, 44, 45.  
 Baghā, mosque, 304.  
 Bahādur Shāh, 7.  
 Bahādur Shāh Sūr, Ghiyāth-ud-dīn, 288.  
 Bahādur Shāh (of Gujrāt), 76, 307.  
 Bake, Arnold, f.n. 12.  
 Bakhtiyar, 47, 91 ; administration, 98, f.n. 170.  
 Balban, House of, 3, 7.  
 Barbak Shāh, Rukn-ud-dīn, 9, f.n. 9, 36, 47, 56, f.n. 116, 119, 152, 167, f.n. 285.  
 Barbosa, Portuguese traveller, 313 ; description of lives of respectable Muslims, 313, 314, 315.  
 Bāyazīd, 71, 76.  
 Bengali, translation of *Mahābhārata* into, 248, 249 ; romanticism, 252, 253, 349.  
 Bengali Hindus, rise to key positions, 37.  
 Bhāghalpur, 5, 6, f.n. 7, 32, 36, 86, 246, 348.  
 Bhakti, cult of, 19, *rāgānuga*, 174 ; *baidhi*, 174, 178, 350.  
 Bhārat Chandra, 254, 263.  
 Bhavadēva Bhaṭṭa, 268, 269.  
 Bhavananda Siddhāntavāgīsha, 272.  
 Bhojar Brahman, 16, 221.  
 Biban, 71, 76.  
 Bihar Sharīf, 5, 6-7.  
 Bijuli Khān, conversion of, 229, 230.  
 Biśva Simha, 41, Vishva Simha, 42, 43, 80.  
*Bodhicharyāvatāra*, *Mahāyāna* work, 179.  
 Brahminism, 11, 17, 19, 186 ; relation with Islām, 189-98 ; relation with Dharmites, 233-35, 236, 238, 240, 242 ; adaptation to changing circumstances, 247, 271, 283, 319, 339, 340.  
 Bṛndāvana Gosvāmī, 277, 278, 279.  
 Bṛndāvanadās, 174, 175, f.n. 244, 273, 278, 321, 336.  
 Buddhism, 178-81 ; conflict with Vaiṣṇavas, 178 ; its impact on Hindu life, 178, 179 ; Tantrīc, 180, 181 ; 182, 184, 218.

- Calicut, 31.
- Chaitanyism, 171 ; influence on society and culture, 176 ; factors leading to growth of, 176-78, 194 ; attitude towards Islām, 231-32 ; 278, 280, 282, 349.
- Chakmas, kingdom of the, 83.
- Chāmkaṭi, mosque, 296, 298.
- Champanir, Jāmi' mosque of, 22.
- Chañḍī, 17, 177, 184, 185, 186, 190, 236, 241, 242 ; conflict between Chañḍī and Manasā, 245 ; work on the cult of, 246, 247 ; 248, 254, 271.
- Chañḍidāsa, 19, 20, 170, 179, 239, f.n. 244, 281.
- Charlemagne, 347.
- Charyāpadas, 17, 252.
- Charyā songs, 11, 12, 179.
- Chauchālā, 297, 298, 302, 305, 306, 309.
- Chausa, battle of, f.n. 88.
- Chhoṭa Pāṇḍuā, 9, f.n. 10, 18 ; mosque of, 20 ; minār of, 24, 25.
- Chhoṭa Sonā, mosque, 297, 301, 302, 303, 304, 306, 308.
- Chhuṭi Khān, 54, 55, 56, 248, 249.
- China, 4.
- Chishtiyah ṣūfīs, 4, 165, 166.
- Chittagong, 10, 29, 31, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, f.n. 83, 86, 87, f.n. 97, 109, 112, 114, 127, 131, 132, 134, 144, 145, 146, 248, 344, 345, 346.
- Christianity, 31, 164.
- Chunar, siege of, 87 ; capture of 88.
- dabīr-i-khāṣ*, officer, 100, 264.
- Dakhil Darwāzah, 296.
- Dakinī Urdū, 11.
- Damodara Svarūpa, 275, 276.
- dāni*, 101.
- Dāniyāl, 38, 45, 46, 48.
- Danujamardana, 185.
- Darasbāḍi mosque, of Gauḍ, 307.
- Darbhangā, f.n. 4, f.n. 6, 8.
- Daryā Khān, tomb of, f.n. 21.
- Daulat Qāḍī, 13, 262, 349.
- Daurah, battle of, 75, 76.
- de Albuquerque, Affonso, 30.
- de Azevedo, Duarte, 86.
- de Gunha, Nuno, 86.
- de Mello, Affonso, 86, 87, 146.
- de Silva Menezes, Antonio, 87.
- Decan, the, 3.
- Delhi, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 28, 32, 58.
- Deokot, 9, Devikot, 130.
- Deva Simha, of Tirhut, f.n. 4.
- Devivara, 197, 198.
- Dhanya Māṇikya, ruler of Tippera, 53, 54, 56.
- Dharma, 18, 30, 163, 177 ; cult, 181-183, 184, 185, 190, 218 ; Islamic influence on, 232-234 ; influence on Muslims, 235, 236 ; work on the cult of, 246, 247 ; 271.
- Dharmites, 17, 182 ; text, 200.
- Dhārāṇa, 207.
- Dhoyi, 277.
- Dhyāna, 206, 207.
- Dil 'Ambari, 214, 216.
- Dil Mudawwāri, 214, 216.
- Dil Nilūfari, 214, 216.
- Dil Ṣanawwāri, 214, 216.
- Dimapur gateway, 26, 308.

*diwān-i-kotwālī*, 100.

*diyār*, 115.

Duimunihila, battle of, 79.

Egypt, 4.

Ekdala, 36, 91; capital of Husain Shāhī, 127, 128, 130.

Eklākhi mausoleum, 21, 296, 309.

Farmulis, the, 68.

Faṭh Khān, 71.

Faṭh Shāh, Jalāl-ud-dīn, 37, 66, f.n. 244, f.n. 285, f.n. 286.

Fīrozah Minār, 25.

Fīrūz, 78, 79; war with Assam, 79, 80, 81; duration of his reign, 81, 82, 92, 94, 95, 98, f.n. 251, 286.

Fīrūz I, Rukn-ud-dīn, 43.

Fīrūz, Shams-ud-dīn, 3, 6, 92.

Fīrūz Shāh, Saif-ud-dīn Abū'l Muẓaffar, 167, f.n. 286.

Fīrūz Tughluq, 3, 7, 8, 13, 98, 130, f.n. 258.

Gadādhara Bhaṭṭāchārya Chakravartī, 272.

Gagan Khān, 53.

Gandharī, nerve, 205.

Gaṅgesha, founder of Mithilā school of *Navya Nyāya*, 273.

Gauḍ, 21, 25, 31, 35, 36, 40, 41, 42, 44, 47, 53, 54, 55, 56, 65, 66, 68, 70, 78, 79, f.n. 83, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 95; its prosperity, 127, 128, 129; 150, 191, 193, f.n. 243, f.n. 244, 303, 306, 314.

Gauḍ Mallik, 53, 64.

*Gaua-nāgara*, doctrine, 174.

Ghazna, 1, 3; coins, 2, 27.

Ghaznawide, 1.

Ghiyāth-ud-dīn, sultān, f.n. 45.

Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Maḥmūd, 42, 43, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82; relation between Bengal and Tippera, 83-84; affairs of the North-western frontier, 84, 85; relation with Jalāl Khān Lūhānī, 85; buying off Sher's hostility, 86; relation with the Portuguese, 86, 87; fighting Sher, 87, 88; death, 88; estimate, 88-89; 92, 94, 95, 98, 106, 109, 146, 315, f.n. 342.

Ghiyāth-ud-dīn Tughluq, 7, 116.

Ghogra, battle of, 74.

Ghor, 1.

Ghūrī ruler, 1.

Ghūrīde, political legacy, 2; ruling family, 3; rulers, 28.

*Gita-govinda*, 19, 20, 175.

Golden mosques, of Gauḍ, 301.

Goṇḍeshvara, temple of, 22.

Gorakṣanātha, 17, 183, 212, 222, 223.

Gorakṣapanthī, 183.

Govardhan Dās, 64.

Govindānanda, 270.

Govinda Vidyādhara, 51.

Gujrāt, 3, 11, 21, 22; mosques, 23, 24, 86, 121.

Gumti Gate, 21, 298, 304.

Gupta empire, the, 11.

Ḥabḥī rulers, 33; government, 34; soldiers, 36, 37; regime, 96.

Ḥafīz, the Persian poet, 11.

Ḥājīpūr, 8, 9, 69, 74, 85, 88, 115.

ḥāl, 209, 225, 227.

- Halāyudha Bhaṭṭa, 268.  
 Ḥamid Khān, 55, 134.  
*hainsanāda*, 213.  
*Ḥaqqīqat*, 208, 209, 210, 211, 215.  
 Haridāsa Nyāyālaṅkāra, 272.  
 Hari Simha Deva (of Tirhut), 7.  
 Hastijivhā, nerve, 205.  
*haṭhayogic*, 179, 180, 207.  
 Ḥatīyān Khān, 53, 54.  
 Hemtabad, mosque, 304.  
 Hindu society, 319, 320; social ceremonies and institutions, 321, 322; marriage customs, 322-25; inheritance, partition, etc., 326; dress, ornaments, etc. 327; widows, 327, 328,; relationship between husband and wife, 329; food, 331; festivals, 332; gods and goddesses, 332, 333; prejudices 333-34; education in, 334, 335; moral degradation, 336; conservatism in, 336-37; rituals, 337, 338; in *Smṛti* writings, 338, 339.  
 Hiraṇya Dās, 64.  
 Humāyūn, 75, 76, 86, 87, 88, 89, 314.  
 Husain Khān, 79.  
 Husain Shāh, of Sharqī dynasty, 5, 28, 38, 39, 40, 254, 263; see also 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain.  
 Husain Shāh of Bengal, see 'Alā'-ud-dīn Husain.  
 Husain Shāhī, kingdom, 7; period, 30; rule, 30; dynasty, 33; rulers, 41; coins, 41, 42, 43; frontiers, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 77.  
 Husain Shāhīs, administrative structure, 90; servants and officials, 95, 96; nobility, 97-99; govt. departments, 99; Prime Minister under, 99; deptt. of correspondence, 100; police deptt. 100, 101; judiciary, 101; finance, 101, 102; military deptt. 103; army, 103, 104; cavalry, 104-05; artillery, 105; admiralty deptt. 105, 106; revenue system and administration, 107-12; customs deptt. 112; public works, 113; provinces under, 113-14; mint-towns, 114; provinces, 114-15; provincial administration, 116-18; governors under, 118, 119; judiciary, 120; administrative terms and honorary titles, 121; resemblance with Gujrat administration and culture, 121; influence on Arakanese administration, 122; decentralizing tendencies, 123; benefits of, 123; population, 124, 125; rural settlements, 125-26; towns and cities, 127-31; agriculture, 131; measurement of lands, 131-33; land tenure system, 133-35; relationship between landlords and tillers of soil, 135, 136; rates of state demands 136, 137; peasantry, 137; crops, 138, 139; trade and commerce, 140-46; volume of trade, 141; exports, 141, 142; price of commodities exported, 142, 143; imports, 143; principal sea-routes, 143, 144; ports, 144-45; control of sea-borne trade, 146; industries, 147-50; textile manufac-



ture, 147-48 ; metallic industry, 149 ; ship-building, 150 ; currency, monetary system, 151 ; coins, 152-56 ; weight of coins, 154 ; gold coins, 155 ; groups of population, 156-60 ; weavers, 156, 157 ; Brahmins, 157-58 ; Kayasthas, 158 ; Vaidyas, 158 ; *mullās*, 158 ; conditions of people, 159-62 ; Islām, 163-69 ; *Ṣūfī*-ism, 165-67 ; *Shī'ite* influences, 167-69 ; relation between Islām and Brahminism, 189-98 ; Kayasthas, 192, 193 ; Muslim-Vaiṣṇava conflict, 228-32 ; Bengali language and literature, 238-64 ; contributions to growth of Bengali, 239, 240 ; poetry under H. *Shāhīs*, 240 ; romanticism in Bengali literature, 252, 253, 264 ; Persian as official language, 264-65 ; Sanskrit literature, 266-83 ; art of calligraphy, 284-91 ; different styles of writing, 285-91 ; music and painting, 291-95 ; architecture, 295-309 ; temples, 305-06 ; resemblance of Bengal monuments with Gujrat ones, 306-07 ; style of architecture, 307, 308, 309 ; Muslim society, 310-18 ; people of lower class, 316, 317 ; education, 317-18 ; Hindu society, 319-40 ; construction of houses, 330-31 ; food, 331 ; contact between Hindus and Muslims, 340-43 ; difference between customs and dialects of East Bengal and of West Bengal, 345 ; growth of Bengali nation, 346 ;

estimate of rule, 347 ; secularism in administration, 348 ; cultural identity of Bengal, 348, 349.

Ibrāhīm *Khān*, 85.

Ibrāhīm *Lūdi*, 68, 111.

Ibrāhīm, Rukn-ud-din, 93.

Ibrāhīm *Sharqī*, 4, 5, 7, 28.

*ijāradārs*, *ijāradārī*, 110, 111, 112.

Ilututmiṣh, 3, 6 ; tomb, 21 ; silver coins of, 28, 43 ; 93.

Ilyās, conquest of Champaran, 7 ; conquest of Tirhut, 8 ; expeditions in Nepal, 8 ; acquisitions in Oudh, 8 ; 13 ; gold coin, f.n. 26 ; 106, 153, 154.

Ilyās *Shāhī*, *suḷṭāns*, 7, 8, 11, 92 ; rule, 3, dynasty, 37.

Ilyās *Shāhīs*, 90, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, f.n. 103, 104, 105, 115, 129, 239, 264, 267, 296, 298, 308, 309, 350.

*Iṅgālā*, 205, 206, 207, 208, 222.

*iqṭim*, 8, 115, 116.

Iran, f.n. 11, 21.

Islām, expansion of, 18, 19 ; 67, 163-69 ; contact with Magianism, 168 ; 177, 189, 190, 202, 221, 224, 228, 232, 233, 236 ; influence on local cults, 241, 271, 312, 318.

Islamic mysticism, 15, 165-67 ; 198-224.

Isma'īl, Bengali envoy, 73.

Isma'īl Ghāzī, 167.

'Iwāḍ *Khaljī*, Ghiyāth-ud-din, 2 ; allegiance to the *Khalīfah* of Baghdad, 2 ; control over upper Bihar, 6, f.n. 14 ; coins of, 27, 28 ; 92, 106.

- Jabarūt*, 209, 210, 215, 216.  
 Jadu, 4, conversion to Islām, 4.  
 Jagadīsha Tarkalāṅkāra, 272.  
 Jagdia, 57.  
*jāgīr*, 98, 110, 111.  
 Jahāngīr, 114.  
 Jahānīan mosque, 301  
 Jains, 178.  
 Jalāl Khān, 87.  
 Jalāl Khān Lūhānī, 71, 72, 85.  
 Jalāl Khān Sharqī, 71, 72.  
 Jalāl-ud-dīn Khaljī, 312.  
 Jalāl-ud-dīn Rūmī, 227, 343.  
 Jam, minār of, 24, 25.  
 Jānakinātha Bhaṭṭācārya Chūdā-  
 māṇi, 272.  
*jangdār*, 120.  
 Jar Kurghan, minār of, 24.  
*jāsu*, 101.  
 Jaunpūr, 3, 4 ; hostility to Bengal  
 5, 7 ; 11, 13, f.n. 14, 22 ; mosques,  
 23, 24, f.n. 26, 28, 32, 69, 289,  
 290 ; architects, 299.  
 Jayadeva, 19, 20, 170, 179, 278,  
 281.  
 Jaya Mahendra Malla, Nepalese  
 king, 42.  
 Jayānanda, 65, 66, 265.  
 Jayantiyā, silver issues, 28.  
 Jimūtavāhana, 268, 269, 326, 340.  
*Jivātmā*, 217, 219.  
 Junagarh, jamī' masjid of, 306.  
  
 Kaikā'ūs, Rukn-ud-dīn, 3, 6, 92.  
 Kalidāsa, 277.  
 Kāmṛūpa, 16, f.n. 18, 28 ; war  
 with Bengal, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45,  
 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 58 ; 77,  
 80, 115, 156, 266, 347.  
 Kāmṭa, 40, 41, 46, 47, 48, 51, 77,  
 80, 92, 115.  
 Kāmṭapur, 62.  
 Kaṇāda Tarkavāgīsha, 272.  
 Kāntanagar, 26, 308.  
 Kāpalikas, 178.  
*kār-i-farmān*, 100, 264.  
 Karrānīs, the, 107.  
 Kavikaṅkan, 310, 312, 319, 320,  
 321, 345.  
 Kavikarṇapūra, biographer of Chai-  
 tanya, 275, 276-77, 278, 280.  
 Kavindra Parameshvara, 65, 240,  
 248.  
 Keshava Khān Chhatri, 95.  
 Ketakādas Kṣemānanda, 345.  
Khalīfah (of Baghdad), 2, 27, 28.  
Khalīfatabād, 61.  
*khālīfatullāh*, assumption of the  
 title of, 4, 92, 93, 311, 347, 348.  
*khāns*, 105.  
*khān-i-a'ẓam*, 97, 121.  
*khān-i-mu'aẓẓam*, 98.  
*khāqān-i-mu'aẓẓam*, 97, 121.  
*khazanāh*, 102.  
Khilāfat, 2, 93.  
Khudā Baksh Khān, 82, 83, 84,  
 122.  
*khwājah-sarā*, 121.  
Khwārizm, 1, Shāh, 1.  
Khwāṣ Khān, 54, 87.  
 Kochas, f.n. 18.  
 Koch, coins, 28 ; resemblance to  
 Bengal coins, 41, 42 ; kings, 41,  
 43.  
*kotwāl-i-bakā'ī*, 100, 117.  
 Kṛṣṇadas Kavirāj, biographer of  
 Chaitanya, 275, f.n. 276, 277.  
 Kṛttivāsa, 12, 239, f.n. 244.

- Kufic*, 285, 288, 289.  
*Kulāchāra*, Tantric worshippers, 187.  
*Kulinism*, 16, 17, 195, 197, 198, 327.  
*kumbhak*, 206.  
*Kuṇḍalinī Shakti*, 184, 206.  
  
*Lāhūt*, 209, 210, 213, 215, 216.  
*Lakhnauti*, 6, 9, 15, 27.  
*Lakṣmaṇa Sena*, f.n. 170, 277.  
*Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa* (king of Kānta) f.n. 40.  
*Lal Darwāzah*, 23.  
*laškar wazīr*, 102, 264.  
*Laṭṭan*, mosque, 296, 303, 304, 308, 309.  
*Lochanadās*, biographer of Chaitanya, 275, 336.  
*Lorak-chāndā*, 257, f.n. 258.  
*Lūhānī*, kingdom, 69.  
*Lūhānis*, the, 68, 85.  
  
*Madariya* sect, 166.  
*Madhusūdana Sarasvatī*, 274.  
*Magadh*, 2, 19.  
*Magianism*, 168.  
*maḥals*, 116, 118, 119.  
*mahāpātrādhīpātra*, 98.  
*Mahendra*, 185.  
*Maḥmūd Lūdī*, 71; anti-Mughal confederacy, 71, 72, 75, 76.  
*Maḥmūd* (of Jaunpur), 5, 28.  
*Maḥmūd II*, Nāṣir-ud-dīn, 99.  
*Maḥmūd Shāh I*, Nāṣir-ud-dīn, 7, 196, f.n. 285, f.n. 286.  
*Mabuan* (Chinese traveller), 193, 264, 284, 313.  
*Mainā Sat*, 257, f.n. 258, f.n. 259, 262.  
  
*Majlis Aulia*, mosque, 304.  
*majmu'adārs*, 108, 109, 112, 161.  
*majlis-ul-majālis*, 98.  
*Maḥdūm 'Ālam*, governor of North Bihar, 69, 73, 84, 85, 86, 122.  
*Maḥdūm Shāh*, f.n. 4.  
*Mālādhara Vasu*, 12, 239.  
*Malakūt*, 209, 210, 215, 216.  
*Malda*, mosque, 23.  
*Malik Abū Rijā*, 117.  
*Malik Aṣṣhraf*, 117.  
*Malik Burhān-ud-dīn*, 117.  
*Malik Marjān*, 76.  
*Malik Shā'bān*, 121.  
*malik-ul-umarā'* wā'l-wazarā, 98, 101.  
*Mālwah*, 3.  
*Mamlūk governorship*, 3.  
*Manasā*, 17, 18, 30, 163, 164, 177, 184, 185, 190, 236, 241, 242, 245, 247, 248, 271, 332, 338, 340.  
*manṣabdārī*, 98, 99.  
*Manasā-maṅgal*, 64, 340.  
*Mandaran*, 50, 58, 60, 130, 346.  
*Maṇipura-chakra*, 204, 206, 215, 216, 217.  
*maqāmāt*, 209, 210.  
*Ma'rīfat*, 209, 210, 211, 215.  
*Mathurānatha Tarkavāgiṣha*, 272.  
*Māyāvādins*, 178.  
*Mechas*, 18.  
*mela* (system), 197.  
*Mint-towns* (of Bengal), 29.  
*mir-i-baḥr*, 106.  
*mir baḥshī*, 102.  
*Mit Malik*, 44, 45.  
*Mithilā*, 5, centre of Nyāya studies, 273.  
*Monghyr*, 5, 6, 45, 46, 48, 115.

- Mṛgavarī*, 40, 166, 183, 246, 254 ;  
story, 255 ; source of the story,  
256, 257, 258, 259 ; influence of,  
260, 261, 262 ; 293.
- Mubarak *Shāh*, Quṭb-ud-dīn, 93.
- mudrā*, 206.
- Mughals, the, 73, 85, 88, f.n. 88,  
101, 311-12, 315, 316, 328.
- Muḥammad Bakhtiyār *Khaljī*,  
*Ikhhtiyār-ud-dīn*, 2 ; activities in  
Magadh and Varendra, 2 ; rela-  
tionship with Delhi ruler, 2, 6 ;  
see also Bakhtiyār *Khaljī*.
- Muḥammad bin Sām, Ghiyāth-ud-  
dīn, 2.
- Muḥammad bin Sām, Mu'izz-ud-  
dīn, 1, 2, 43.
- Muḥammad bin Tughluq, 8, 93,  
115.
- Muḥammad Farmulī, *Shāh*, 71.
- Muḥammad Jaisī, Malik, 259, 263.
- Muḥammad Madhhab, Mullāh, 70.
- Muḥammad *Shāh*, Jalāl-ud-dīn, 4 ;  
coins, f.n. 26, 28 ; 92, 93, f.n.  
191, f.n. 267, f.n. 285.
- Muḥammad *Shīrān*, 2.
- Mu'izz-ud-dīn Bahram, 43.
- mulk*, 115.
- Mūlādhāra-chakra*, 184, 204, 206,  
215, 216, 217.
- munsif*, 101, 120.
- muqaddam*, 120.
- muqṭi'*, 98.
- Murāri Gupta, biographer of Chal-  
tanya, 274, 276, 278, 280.
- Muslim middle class, 13.
- Muslim mystics, 16, 164.
- Musundar Ghāzi, governor, f.n. 45.
- Muẓaffar *Shāh*, *Shāms-ud-dīn*, f.n.  
7, f.n. 26, 33-35 ; death, 35 ;  
36, 37, 90, f.n. 244, 290.
- Nām-i-Ḥaq*, f.n. 14.
- Nara Narāyaṇ, 41.
- Narsing Deo, of Tirhut, f.n. 6.
- Naskh*, 285, 286, 287.
- Nāsūt*, 209, 210, 213, 215, 216.
- Nasta'liq*, 289, 291.
- Nātha cult, 15, 163, 223 ; work  
on the cult, 246.
- Nāthapanthīs, 18, 183, 184, 200, 246.
- Nathism, 183, 208 ; essential fea-  
tures of, 212, 213, 216, 217,  
218, 222, 223 ; Shaivāntrik, 183.
- Navadvīpa, 50, 64, 65, 66, 170,  
171, 173, 174, 176, 177, 190,  
191, 192, 193, 194, 226, 230,  
246, 248 ; study of Indian philo-  
sophy at, 273, 335, 342, 345,  
349.
- Navagrāma, mosque, 304.
- Navi-Vaṇisha*, f.n. 15, 224, 249.
- Nepal, f.n. 12, 42.
- Nilāmvar, of Khen dynasty, 41,  
47, 48.
- Nirañjaner Uṣmā*, 19.
- Nityānanda, 171, 175, 176 ; activi-  
ties of, 180.
- niyama*, 207.
- Nizāmī, 256, 257.
- Nūr Quṭb-i-'Ālam, *Shaikḥ*, f.n. 16,  
129, 165, 166.
- Nuṣrat *Shāh*, 9, 42, 43, 45, 55,  
56, f.n. 61, 63, 65 ; extension of  
territory, 69 ; relation with Babur,  
70, 71, 72, 73 ; fighting against  
Babur, 74 ; peace with Babur,  
75, 76 ; his hold on Kāmṛpa

- and Kāmṭa, 77; war with Assam, 77; estimate of, 78, 79, 81, 82, 86, 87, 92, 94, f.n. 103, 104, 106, 111, 120, 122, 153, 154, 164, 166, f.n. 250, 251, 252, 287, 288, 299, f.n. 303, 312, 318.
- Nyāya*, 18, 190, 272, 281, 283.
- Nyāya, Navya*, 30, 194; school of Navadvīpa, 272; Mithilā school of, 273; 280; school of, 282 349.
- Odantapurī, 19.
- Oinwāras, f.n. 4.
- Oinwāra dynasty, 8.
- Padmāsana, 205, 216.
- pahlawī-t-aṣṣr wa'z zamān*, 98.
- pāiks*, 103, 104, 105.
- Pāla rule, the, 11; administration, 98.
- Pañcha makāra*, 187.
- Pañcha-tattva*, doctrine, 175.
- Pāñchālī* (poems), 30.
- Pāṇḍuā, f.n. 4, 21, 25, 52, 57, 127; its importance, 128-29; 130, 150, 154, 165, 303.
- Panipat, battle of, 69.
- Parāgal Khān, 55, 56, f.n. 57, 65, f.n. 97, 130, 248, 249.
- Parakiyā*, 219.
- Paramānanda Sena, see Kavikarṇa-pūra.
- Paramātmā*, 217, 219.
- Parīkṣit-Nārāyaṇ, ruler of Kām-rūpa, f.n. 40.
- Pāshupatas, 178, 185.
- Pashvāchāra*, tantrics, 187.
- Pathans, the 311, 312, 316.
- Patna, 5.
- Persian, 238; official language, 264, 265, influence on life of Bengal, 266, 243.
- Persian, 11; merchants, 311, 313, 344.
- Piṅgalā*, 205, 206, 207, 208, 222.
- Portugal, 31.
- Portuguese, the, 30; policy in India, 31, 57, f.n. 83, 86; power in Bengal, 86-87; farmers, 108, 109, 110, 112, 134, 145, 146, 344.
- Prajñā*, 180.
- prāṇāyāma*, 207.
- Pratāp Rudra Deva, 50, 51, f.n. 52, 78, 171.
- pratyāhāra*, 207.
- pūrak*, 206.
- Qadam Rasūl, 299-300, 306, 308.
- qāḍī*, 120, 121, 135.
- Qanauj, battle of, 70.
- Quṭban, 40, 166, 183, 254, 256, 257, 260, 261, 262.
- Quṭb Khān, 73; governor of Monghyr, 84, 106.
- Quṭb Minar, 24, 25.
- Quṭb Shāhi mosque, of Hadrat Pāṇḍuā, 307.
- Quṭbul Aṣhageen, 134.
- Raḍh, 18, 319, 346.
- Radhā-Kṛṣṇa, 19, 20; cult, 274, 277, 278.
- Raḍī-ul-Mulk, 117.
- Raḍīyah, sultāna, 27, 43.
- Raghunandana, 17, 30, 268-71, 283, 320, 321, 323, 327, 328,

- 332, 333, 334, 337, 339, 340, 349.  
 Raghunāthadāsa, 280.  
 Raghunātha Tārikā Shīromāṇi, 272, 349.  
 Rājā Gaṇeśha, 3, 4, 11, 190, 191, 267.  
 Rājī Hamīd Shāh, 166.  
 Rājmaḥal, 5, 32.  
 Rāmabhadra, 269.  
 Rāmchandra Khān, 50, 64, 109, 123.  
 Raykachhag, 53.  
 Rayamukūṭa Bṛhaspati, digest writer, 17, 267, 269.  
 Rudra Nyāya Vachaspati, 277.  
 Rukn Khān 'Alā'-ud-dīn Sarḥatī, Khān, 117.  
 Rukn-ud-dīn Samarqandī, 15, 221.  
 Rūpa, 64, 171, 277, 281, 319, 335.  
 Sābirid Khān (Bengali poet) 252, 253, 254, 262, 263, 343.  
 Safī'-ud-dīn, 18, 25.  
 Sahajiyās, Buddhist, 19, 180, 208.  
 Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism, 179, 219.  
 Saḥasrāra, 184, 206, 207, 208, 213.  
 Saiyid Sultān, 13, 15, 165, 198, 203, 205, 208, 209, 211, 212, 213, 215, 218, 224; cultural synthesis, 225, 237, 249.  
 Saiyids, the, 311, 316.  
 Saljūk, 1.  
 samādhi, 206, 207.  
 Saṅkarpāsha mosque, 304.  
 Sanskrit, 238; literature during Sena period, 266; during Muslim rule, 266-83; 343, 349.  
 Saptagrāma, 144; commercial importance, 145, 157.  
 sar-i-khail, 104, 105, 264, f.n. 343.  
 sar-i-lashkar, 102, 116, 117, 118, 264.  
 sarkārs, 113, 114.  
 Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭāchārya, 66.  
 Sat-chakra, 204; -bheda, 187.  
 Satgaon, 9, 10, 29, 57, 59, 60, 87, 109, 110, 112, 127, 131, 145, 146, 344.  
 Sāt Gumbad mosque, of Bagerhat, 309.  
 Satyapīr, 17, 18, 30, 165.  
 Sena rule, 29; administration, 98; kings, 169, 190.  
 Shāh Daulah, Maulānā, 166.  
 shahnah-i-pīl, 106.  
 Shāh Rūkh, 5.  
 Shāh Shujā', 134, 135.  
 Shāh Shujā''s gate, 298.  
 Shaikh Aḥmad Khattī, tomb of, 21, 306, 307.  
 Shaikh Burhān, 166.  
 Shaikh Faizullāh, 13, 15, 167, 212, 237.  
 Shaikh Ḥusām-ud-dīn Mānikpuri, 166.  
 Shaikh Jalāl Majarrad bin Muḥammad Turkistānī, 167.  
 Shaikh Kabīr, 250, 251.  
 Shaikh Zāhid, 198; theory of creation, 199-202; importance of human body, 203; 252.  
 Shaivism, 180, 185, 235, 241, 242, 245, 247.  
 Shaikhīnī, 205.  
 sharādār-i-ghair-maḥalli, 95, 96, 121, 264.  
 sharī'at, 208, 209, 210.

Sharifābād, 60.

Sharqī, kingdom, 38; dynasty, 38, 39, 63.

Shaṭṭariya Ṣūfī, 166.

Shekhara, Kavi, f.n. 250-51.

Sher Khān (Shāh), 6, 71, 72, 76, f.n. 83, 84, 85; ascendancy in Bihār, 86, 87; occupying Gauḍ, 88, 89, 99, 106, 116.

shiqdār, 108, 120, 131.

Shī'ism, 167-69.

Shrī-Amitāva, a *Sadbauddha-karaṇa-kāyastha ṭhakkura*, 179.

Shrī-Chaitanya, 20, 50, 66, 67, 169; early life, 170, 171; 172-75, 176, 177, 178, 192, 193, 198, 225, 226, 228, 230, 237; importance of his biography, 263, 264, 274; Sanskrit biography, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 295, 322, 326, 331, 332, 342; tour over East Bengal, 345, 349.

Shridhara, 240, 252, 253, 254, 262, 363.

Shrikara Nandi, 65, 192, 240, 248.

Shrīnātha Āchāryachūḍāmaṇi, 126, 269, f.n. 270, 334.

Shūlapāṇi, 17, 267, 268, 269, (digest-writer).

Sidi Saiyid mosque (of Ahmedabad), 307.

Sikandar Lūdī, non-aggression pact with Husain Shāh, 9; treaty of peace with Husain Shāh (of Bengal), 38-39; soldiers of, 62, 63, 111, 166, 254, 292.

Sikandar Shāh, 115, f.n. 286.

Sipah sālār, 104, 105.

Slave rulers, 2.

Smṛti, 18, 268-71; Navadvīpa school of, 270, 271; 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 337, 338, 339, 340.

sohain mantra, 184.

somarasa, 213.

Sonārgaon, 10, f.n. 14, 29, 115, 127, 131, 134, 141, 144, 145.

Spain, Muslim rule in, 31.

Ṣūfī-ism, 165-67, 198-224; cosmological theories of, 199-202; yogic, 204-08; ṣūfistic stages, 209-11; Nātha influence on 212-13; Naqshbandī ṣūfis of North India, 214; Qādirī ṣūfis, 214; yogic-tantric 215-19; pantheism, 219-20, 223, 226, 227; influence on Vaiṣṇavism, 225-28; 236, 237; see also Islamic mysticism.

Suklenmun, Ahom ruler, 42.

Sulaimanābād, 60.

Sulṭān Husain of Darbhanga, f.n. 4.

Sura, mosque, 303.

Surajgarh, battle of, 85; its significance, 86.

Sūrs, the, 107.

suṣumnā, 205, 206, 207, 208.

Svādhiṣṭhāna-chakra, 204, 206, 217.

Svakīyā, 219.

Sylhet, 10, 62, 345.

talukdārs, 111.

Tāntipāḍā (mosque), 296, 304.

Tantricism, 163, 179, 180; influence on Hindu society, 186; rites, practices and philosophy, 187, 189, 206, 208, 217, 218; 220, 336.

Tāntrikas, 19.

- Taqī-ud-dīn, 318.  
*Ṭariqat*, 208, 209, 210, 215.  
 Teliagarhi, 5, 6, 86, 87, f.n. 88, 127.  
 Tharus, f.n. 18.  
*Thulth*, 285, 286, 287.  
 Tibet, 42.  
 Tibeto-Burman, 18.  
 Tippera, 10 ; kingdom, f.n. 18, 28, 45, conflict with, 52-58 ; 62, 64, 83, 84, 105, 132, 145.  
 Tirhut, f.n. 4, 5, 6, f.n. 6, 7, 8, 9, 69, 74.  
 Todar Mall, 112, 113.  
 Trivenī, 9, f.n. 10, f.n. 18, 20.  
 Tughluq Sultānate, 3.  
*Ṭughrā*, 26, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 350.  
 Tughril, 3.  
 Turbak, 77, 79.  
 Turkish hordes to India, 1 ; feudalism, 2.  
 ‘Ubaydullāh al-Mahdī, Fatimid ruler, 168.  
 ‘Ulemā, 3, 4.  
*ultā sādhanā*, 207.  
*Upāya*, 180.  
 Vaiṣṇavism, 163, 169-78 ; hostility to Buddhism, 178 ; 179, 185, 190, 193, 194, 208 ; relation with Islām, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229 ; Muslim-Vaiṣṇava conflict, 230 ; 264, 268, 270, 274, 278, 345.  
 Vaiṣṇava literature, 174, 175, 178, 179 ; influence on Buddhism, Jainism, Tantricism, and Shiva cult, 226, works, 274-79.  
 Vajrachārya sect, f.n. 12.  
 Vajrayāna order, f.n. 12.  
 Vallāla Sera, 16, 283.  
 Vaṅga, 346.  
 Vāṅgāla, 345.  
 Vardhamāna, 273.  
 Varendra, 1, 2, 191, 319, 346.  
 Varthema, 344, 345.  
 Vāsuli, f.n. 12.  
 Vidyāpati, 19, 20, 170.  
 Vidyā-Vāchaspati, 66.  
 Vijaya Gupta, 120, 123, 192, 240, 242, f.n. 243, f.n. 244, 310, 319, 321, 322, 332, 340, 341.  
 Vijayanagar, kingdom, 30.  
 Vikramashilā, 19.  
 Vipradās, 240, 242, 244, 310, 312, 319, 332, 341.  
*Vishuddha-chakra*, 204, 207, 217.  
 Viṣṇupur temple, 26, 308.  
 Wahhābī-Farā’idī movement, 19.  
*wazīr*, 98, 102, f.n. 116, 117, 118, 121, 134.  
*wazīr lashkar*, 102, 122, 264.  
*wazīr wa var-lashkar*, 102.  
 Yahyā Manerī, Sharf-ud-dīn, f.n. 14.  
*yama*, 207.  
 Yoga philosophy, 205-08, 212-13, 215-19, 222-23, 251.  
 Yogic (system of Indian philosophy), 206, 207 ; mysticism, 220.  
 Yashorāj Khān, 240, 249, 251.  
 Yusūf Shāh, 297.  
 Yūzbak, Mughīl-ud-dīn, 3, 92.  
 Zafar Khān (Ghāzi), 18 ; mosque of, 20 ; 25.  
 Zamān Mīrzā, 74.  
*Zamindāri*, *zamindārs*, 111, 112.













